THE CHRISTIAN MORAL CRITERION

BY

ROBERT JENNINGS GIBSON

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An Essay in Ethical Principles and the Moral Life.

BY

ROBERT JENNINGS GIBSON

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PREFACE

It is with a considerable degree of caution and a feeling of great humility that one of my age approaches the question of the basic principles of human conduct. Having lost the easy faith of childhood in the divine origin of convention and the infallibility of adult opinion; the less easy but no less convincing faith of the adolescent in the conclusiveness of his own rational decisions; without sufficient actual experience of the vast ramifications of life in this complicated civilization to have established principles upon an empirical basis with any degree of certainty; and not yet having arrived at the dogmatism of advanced age, one feels that he is in a sense alone in the world, without an adequate point of contact with the principles of any one of the great portions of humanity represented by these various modes of arriving at moral judgments or ethical principles.

On the other hand, this feeling of academic isolation has its advantage in a sense of freedom, a possibility of eclecticism in method which strict adherence to any of the methods, whether from conviction or from sentiment, does not permit.

Every age and generation has its peculiar problems of conduct, as well as the perennial problems which confront all ages and all men. One is led to

imagine that every age is an age of crisis; that, unless a remedy for the moral insensibility of men is found, the world will "go to the dogs". Yet, the world continues to go on, even though, so far as one can observe, no radical reforms take place. The probable reason for this feeling is the fact that problems which are present most of the time, over long periods of the world's history, appear to each generation, in fact, to each individual, as immediate and peculiarly vital. Whereas the solutions to such problems come, not by individual action nor the single revolt of one generation, but by a process of transition which is the result of experience and education. True, individuals play their part in the transitions, and a very important part it is, but the solution is seldom, if ever, effected by the individual who conceives it, seldom, in fact, does it occur in his life-time. Those in whose life-time it does occur are often unaware of the origin of the idea, while those who come after are apt to be unaware that there was ever a problem involved in that particular situation, merely taking the solution for granted and concerning themselves with other, to them, just as vital problems. It is the way the world advances. That it has advanced in the field of ethics and morals is as unquestionable as its advance in the field of science and invention, although the former has not, and can

hardly be expected to keep up with the latter.

In other words, every age faces critical situations in which problems of conduct appear of vital importance. It witnesses, often without being aware of it, the progressive solution of the problems which were vital in the preceeding age. And it is blissfully ignorant of the problems which are to confront its children and grand-children.

Today we hear on all sides the ever recurrent cry of "Immorality", and the complaint of the degeneracy of the age. Problems have developed of which our forebears never dreamed. The increasing complication of civilized existence has rendered increasingly complex the problems which every age has to meet. We are told, as every age has been told before, that some remedy is imperative. The failure of Christianity, in the form of organized Churches, to do something which will bring immediate improvement is used as an inditement of all organized religion. No solution is regarded as adequate which is not a sure "cure-all" for each and every problem. Without minimising the problems which the present does present nor the responsibility of all Christian people to face them courageously and to do all in their power to bring improvement, I think we may take some consolation from the historical repititions of the cries of dispair, and we may be reasonably sure that the world is not faced with immediate ruin. We may even

hope, with some degree of assurance that our hope is not vain, that through the progressive solution of the problems of today God is effecting a closer approach to the consummation of His purpose.

There is another factor which is a basis for optimism. It is the psychological fact that the closer one approaches to the realization of an ideal, provided that ideal is sufficiently high to tax his powers to the utmost, the more poignent becomes his feeling of failure and his sense of inferiority. This is abundantly illustrated in the lives of the Saints. One may be reasonably sure that the Incarnation and Atonement of Christ, continued through the centuries in the Christian Church, have been effective in raising the general level of ethics and morality in the world, as well as producing individuals who are admittedly far above the general level of their own age. Failure to perceive and really believe this is hardly consistent with a true faith in Jesus as the Lord of Life. These two facts would seem to account, in some measure, for the doubts and disturbance of the present. Without that faith in Christ which enables one to see and accept as facts the obvious improvements (and such faith is sadly lacking in too many people), the feeling of failure becomes a ground for pessimism, a sense of frustration, and an increasing doubt of the powers of man to achieve anything like a consistent ethics, or a

moral life in accordance with such principles. The natural result is a questioning of the worth-whileness of further effort, or the advisability of a lowering of standards. The Christian faith is optimistic. Neither blinking at problems, nor refusing to recognize the disparity between contemporary life and the ideals of Christ and the Kingdom, it does recognize as real the progress that has been made. It credits it to its real source, the power and grace of God working through human agencies. And it has a practical faith in the competance of that Power to overcome the remaining evils in the world. This, and every age, is an age of transition. Without change there can be no progress. We build upon the achievement of the past, with their failures as a warning, and with an abundant faith that "every day, in every way, we are becoming better and better."

"They are first lost who stand apart in pride,
And last whose hearts accept the lightning's way,
Where bolts blast first at feet that draw aside;
There's a great trouble in men's hearts today:
Fierce change is on us, not to be denied!
The Unexpected shapes its dared foray;
Round bright embattled flags the thunders glide,
And men behold the gods again at play!

"And now's the hour when, crying blacker doom,
Creep small, false prophets whispering tales of
doom,
Lag faithless Heart and interested Cheat--
Although it is that perfect turn of time
When every brow should lift itself, sublime,
Wearing a faith that nothing can defeat."
(Harry Kemp, "Sonnet for a Time of Change", the
Saturday Evening Post, July 12, 1930.)

(Signed) A.B.C.

At Chelsea Square, New York City,
Michaelmas, A.D. 1930.

Prolegomena: Definitions and assumptions.

In dealing with subjects of a controversial character it is always well to determine in the very begining the meanings which more or less ambiguous terms are to carry throughout. There are a great many such terms connected with Ethics and Moral Theology, the more important of which we shall define at once, though other definitions may be necessary as we proceed with the discussion. That many readers will not be willing to accept all of our definitions is to be expected, but it is to be hoped that they will bear them in mind during the reading, in order that they may follow the argument as nearly as possible in the form in which the writer thinks of it.

The practical limits of such a paper make it impossible to cover the whole field of Ethics. There are several branches of the subject which we can no more than touch upon, in the form of assumptions, and we trust that they will be accepted as legitimate ones. Where they are of a controversial nature we shall give, in brief, our reasons for making them, without attempting a full discussion of the 'pros and cons'. None of them will be original, and where possible I shall give references to more full discussions of the topics. As most of them will have a vital bearing upon the conclusion, the reader is requested to bear them in mind even though he may

be unwilling to accept their full implications.

The word "ethics" has been frequently defined as "the science of conduct". This definition is faulty in two respects. Ethics is not a science in the usual sense of the term, although it is, in a way, akin to the normative sciences, such as anthropology, sociology, and applied psychology. Nor does ethics concern itself with all of conduct. If it did, it would have to include all of what is covered by the normative sciences and a great deal more. In our discussion we shall limit the term to the conduct of human beings when acting as <u>rational</u> agents.

"Morals" or "moral" (as a noun) are very closely related to the word "ethic" or "ethics". They are derived etymologically from Latin and Greek roots respectively, which are almost exactly synonymous. In common speech they are used almost interchangeably, except for an inaccurate and pernicious distinction which is all too common; that is, the use of moral and its opposite as referring almost exclusively to sexual matters, and ethics or ethical to refer to all other kinds of conduct. The distinction is pernicious because it robs morality of much of its meaning, tending to give the impression that the only kind of immorality that really matters is sexual impurity. The undue emphasis placed upon sex by most, or a great many moralists, is, to my mind, the cause of

the deplorable conditions in sexual affairs today. The reasons we shall see later. (1)

There is a legitimate distinction, though not a necessary one, which is sometimes made between the two words, and which I find very convenient. It is a distinction of method rather than of content. Ethics we shall use to refer to the more philosophical portion of the subject--the first principles and the reasoning by which they are adduced. Morals will be used when we are thinking of the application of principles to concrete cases. Thus, in the title of this essay, we should call the criterion "moral" when thinking primarially of its application to life; "ethical" when thinking of the criterion as a system of principles (or a single principle) and the method by which they (or it) have (has) been formulated.

Somewhat the same distinction may be made between two pairs of correlative terms which are often sources of considerable confusion: namely, good-evil and right-wrong. We shall use the former pair as objective terms, with reference to the criterion in its ethical significance. The latter we shall limit to particular actions, referring to the criterion in its moral application. This distinction, again, is legitimate for the purpose of clearness, but is not necessary.

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(1) See page 38.

The word "criterion", of course, means a standard of measurement. We might compare it with a yard-stick, or, more appropriately, with a scale balance. The difficulty in picking an analogy appears when we qualify it by the term "ethical" or "moral". The standards with which we are most familiar are purely objective ones, used to measure objective and, for the most part, physical things. All moral and ethical problems, however, have a subjective element. This is especially true in Christian Ethics, since Our Lord impressed upon His followers the importance of the motive, as well as (or even more important than) the results. Is it possible to find a standard by which we can measure the subjective motives of action as well as the more objective results. That is one of the problems we must face, and it is not a simple one.

We speak of "Christian Ethics" and the "Christian Moral Criterion". What do we understand by the word "Christian"? It is a question on which we find a great divergence of opinion, all the way from the "Catholic" churchman, who will not allow anyone the designation who is not a member of the Catholic Church (in his definition), accepting its creeds and receiving its sacraments, to the man who accepts the ethical teaching of Our Lord as valid, but refuses to accept any of the dogmatic claims made about Him or

by Him, but still insists that he be called a Christian. The author is inclined to agree with the latter view, especially when considering ethical matters. Certainly there are many people who act, more or less, in accord with the teaching of Christ, who are in no way connected with any organized Church. There are ethical principles accepted by the majority of people today, which are distinctly Christian in origin, but no longer require the support of the Church to secure recognition. As Dr. Rashdall has so aptly expressed it: "The most certain thing about the teaching of Jesus is that He did teach this doctrine of universal love. Anyone who admits that He did so, and that He taught nothing inconsistent therewith, and who also regards this teaching as the fundamental truth of Morality, is already a disciple of Jesus, in a very distinctive and definite sense." (1) Thus, we shall use the word "Christian", in the ethical application, to designate those principles which either; (a) were enunciated by Christ Himself; or (b) are clearly derivative from such principles; or (c) are entirely consistent with them, though not to be found in His teaching as we have it.

The words "self", "personality", and "ethical agent" we may take as being, for all practical purposes, synonymous. "Person," in the theological

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(1) "Conscience and Christ", p. 108.

sense, is "the integrating principle of a rational nature". This definition, however, will hardly suit our purpose, though it gives us a hint as to what we want. The "self" we define as the totality of elements which go to make up a rational being acting as a unit. Or, in the words of Milburn, "an organic whole consisting of an active supernatural principle of self-hood and certain psychical elements derived from Nature, its aim in every action being itself as realized through that action." (1) We shall have more to say of "self-realization" later. (2)

The words "personality" and "agent (ethical or moral)" have essentially the same denotation, though a slightly different connotation. The former is usually used with particular reference to the characteristics of the person, considered in his relationship to other persons. The latter has more particular reference to the person as an active being, whether in relation with other persons or with lower, animate or inanimate, things.

"Volition", or "voluntary action", we define as "whole self action", that is the agent acting as a rational whole. "On the one hand it (common opinion) insists, and rightly, that an action is not to be accounted moral simply because it is a constituent of some species of welfare or because it tends in that direction. A moral action must also be the act of an agent capable of appreciating this justification and of responding to it. His response must be conscious, and perhaps should even be reflective, but the capacity for consciousness and reflection is sufficient, and this process, in

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(1) "The Theology of the Real", p.116.

(2) See pages 23f. and 85f.

the full sense at least, need not actually occur when we act responsibly and yet from habit. It may be held indeed,....that a certain form of consciousness, and even a faint adumbration of reflection, is present in all moral action. This is what certain older writers (the 'great' Arnauld, for example) called reflexion virtuelle, and opposed to reflexion expresse." (1) Action, to be voluntary, must be accompanied by consciousness and reflection, but we agree with Mr. Laird that there is more to moral action than that which is explicitely voluntary. The reasons will appear in the course of the discussion. (2)

The assigned title of the essay suggests certain limits, but it is delightfully vague. A considerable variety of approaches is open, each one involving a preliminary discussion detailed to some extent. For example, one might take the metaphysical approach, deducing the principles of the criterion from the "First Principles" of his favorite metaphysical system. Again, he might make an historical examination of the various ethical principles which have been accorded favor by the Church at various periods. He might attempt the formulation of a complete system through a critical examination of Biblical passages. He might trace the connections between recognized Christian principles and various non-Christian ethical systems. None of these special lines of investigation appeals to the writer

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(1) Laird, "A Study in Moral Theory, p.209.(Italics his)

(2) See page 82.

particularly, and the present attempt is a combination of elements from practically all of them. The assumptions which are to be made will serve to outline somewhat the line of attack.

Let us assume, first of all, that human beings are,normally, ethical subjects. This is such an obvious postulate that it may seem superfluous to mention it. To write on an ethical topic without making it seems impossible, unless one can imagine such a contradiction in terms as a "Mechanistic", or "Behavioristic" Ethics. However, this assumption carries with it several further postulates which are not so obvious.

Metaphysically the recognition of the existence of ethical subjects implies the existence of what Driesch has called a "Supra-personal Entelechy" (1) to account for them. From the writer's observation,it is impossible to account for them in any other way, and it is instructive to note that many writers, approaching the topic from an entirely different angle, arrive at this as a conclusion. (2) Furthermore, the designation of our topic as the Christian moral criterion makes it legitimate for us to assume what is, certainly, one of the primary postulates of all Christian thought and teaching: namely, the existence of God, and I feel

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(1) Driesch, "Ethical Principles. p.49 et passim.

(2) See Bosanquet, "Some suggestions in Ethics",p.81; Milburn, "The Theology of the Real",p,145; Scott, "New Testament Ethics",p.96; Green,"Prolegomena to Ethics", passim.

that it warrants the further assumption of the full Theistic position.

An ethical subject must be able, in some way, to distinguish between right and wrong, good and evil, better and worse, and best and worst. In other words, the assumption of ethical subjects involves the assumption of some sort of ethical sense in the subject, which is usually designated as the Conscience. Just what the Conscience is and how it works has been a subject of almost endless controversy and, so far as I am aware, it has been solved no more than the cognate problem of Epistemology in Philosophy. I have long been convinced that the conslusion of the ordinary man on the latter problem: "I know, and I know that I know, and there is an end of the matter", is worth just as much as the seemingly endless argumentation of the Philosophers. Just so with the moral sense: we know what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is evil, and there is an end of it. The fact that we make mistakes in moral judgment is no more of an argument against the possession of the moral sense, than the equally obvious fact, that we make mistakes in the ordinary process of thinking and observing is an argument against the possession of reason and the senses. The moral sense is not infallible, but it is a fact.

A further implicate of the assumption we have made is the fact of the objective existence of moral values as ends. For a full discussion of this involved problem, the reader is referred to Prof. Sorley's very masterly

treatment, with which the present writer is in entire accord; although he does feel that Prof. Sorley makes the problem more difficult than it really is by his circuitous approach.(1) Ultimately, he feels sure, it resolves itself into a special application of epistemology, with the conclusion that, if we know anything, we do know that some things are better than others, and that many things are good,- not simply good for us, but good in themselves. And thus we may return to our first postulate, the existence of God, and make a connecting link with "the notion of a realization in God of our ideal of what ought to be; which thus we can say not only ought to be, but in truth is."(2)

Another characteristic of the ethical subject, which really belongs to metaphysics, but which is seldom omitted from a discussion of ethics, is the freedom to choose between ethical ends - the good or the evil, the better or the worse - and to choose the morally right or wrong means of attaining these ends. Freedom of choice is almost universally assumed by writers in ethics, when, as a matter of fact, it has little, if anything, to do with ethics or morals. An ethical criterion based upon one's concept of the content of the "good", or of what "ought to be", can be theoretically formulated, irrespective of any conception of its attainment, either through the free choice of subordinate wills, or through the freedom of an All Powerful Will to realize it. The application of such

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(1) Sorley, "Moral Values and the Idea of God".

(2) Webb, "A Century of Anglican Theology", p.88. (Italics his)

a criterion to particular actions can be made so long as men feel that they have the freedom to choose, that is, so long as they can ask "Why did you do that?" or reply "I did it because", or "in order that...." The question of freedom is ethically of no importance to the unsophisticated man, and even the sophisticate acts as though he were free, and others were also free, when he argues for the belief in his doctrine of determinism; for real determinism carries with it the determination of thought as well as action. Fundamentally, therefore, the only point at which the problem of freedom enters into a discussion such as this is at the transition point between theoretical ethics and practical morality. It is only when we consider the possibility of realizing what we conceive to be the "good" that the question is pertinent at all. It has nothing to do with the content of the "good", nor with the practical means for attaining it, once the possibility of doing so is conceded.

However, since Christianity has almost universally agreed to accept the antinomy of an Omnipotent God and created free wills, and since we are considering this problem as Christians, we may assume this latter doctrine, all the more easily because it has so little to do with the conclusions we may reach.

One further assumption of a metaphysical and theological nature we must make, giving it and our reasons for assuming it in the form of a quotation: "It is a

fact that for those who absolutely deny immortality all things are at bottom ethically indifferent. Such men will, as a rule, be atheists and materialists, or, at any rate, they will hold mechanistic beliefs. Human nature is so constituted that even those beliefs will not suffice to blind those who hold them to ethical intuition, or deafen them to the voice of conscience....But they cannot be truly binding. If a man has such beliefs he is rather bound to tell himself that nature has committed upon him a sort of fraud and deception in order to preserve the race or species; and ethics here cannot but turn into an instinct for the preservation of the species, and no more. But we may ask how far he is concerned with the species, and how far the species is concerned with itself, if life is nothing more than a rather complicated kind of mechanics, and life and spirit are nothing more than "epiphenomenon". In fact a man who denies immortality cannot consistently be a consciously ethical person, and if in practice he generally is an ethical being, this fortunate fact is due to his theoretical inconsistency". (1)

The same line of reasoning has led another writer, also not a Churchman, to formulate one of the most cogent arguments against Humanism, (2):

> "'The spirit of the worm beneath the sod
> 'In love and worship blends itself with God.'
> "In seeking, then, the most universal value of
> mere humanity as such, we have found something

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(1) Driesch, "Ethical Principles", p.222

> more, something with which it is continuous, and from which it is inseparable. And this something seems to be a sense of reliance, of belonging, and of absorption, which has kinship with the essence of religion. Humanism *per se*, and cut off from this pervading sense, is artificial perhaps, and unstable. 'The high Renaissance pride and glow are apt to leave this bitter taste in the end. Absorption in man as the centre of the world and the hero of existence leads certainly to that loss of sanity and sweetness which an openness to the abiding presence of the non-human living world around us infuses into life. It is not by that absorption that we shall find the full meaning or animating power of our Western faith that in man the Divinity is revealed.'" (3)

Considering the problem from a Christian standpoint, I think we may also assume, without fear of begging the question, the primary postulates of Christian Dogmatic Theology, the doctrines of God, the Trinity and the Incarnation. These are ultimately incapable of logical demonstration, even though one admits the strength of the arguments in their favor, so that the acceptance of them is really an act of faith. The arguments belong to the field of apologetics

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of the modern Humanist's position.

(3) Bosanquet, "Some Suggestions in Ethics",p.81, who quotes Laurence Binyon, "Painting in the Far East".

rather than ethics, although the doctrines themselves have a very real bearing upon our ethical and moral conclusions.

We shall also assume, without any attempt at demonstration, that the New Testament provides the primary and only contemporary evidence for the life and teaching of Our Lord, and that it can be trusted, for the most part, to give valid testimony. We recognize, however, the value of critical study, and feel sure that, as a result of it, we are closer today to the mind of Christ than were the Christians of the second century or any subsequent period. As students of "Christian" ethics and morals this life and teaching are of vital importance to us. The question of their authority and application today will form a considerable portion of the ensuing discussion.

Part I

Criterion or Criteria?

We are now in a position to face a problem which many ethical writers pass over entirely. Is it possible to formulate a criterion which will be applicable universally, that is, applicable to all people at all times, under any and every circumstance? The usual course of ethical investigation is to assume that this is possible, then to examine the criteria of previous systems and, finding them all unsatisfactory, to formulate another which the investigator finds more in accord with the requirements of his own mind. This new one may satisfy him and many other people, but there will always be found someone to object, on the ground that it fails to cover a part of the ground which he feels to be a legitimate ethical problem, or that it is contrary to what he feels to be legitimate ethical principles. Who is to say that one is right and the other wrong, unless one can demonstrate to the objector's satisfaction that his criterion does cover the ground, or that, either it is not contrary to his principles or his principles are invalid?

Let us glance at a few of the criteria which have been suggested for universal acceptance as guiding principles. There is the "pleasure-pain" criterion, in two forms: the purely individualistic Hedonism, with the happiness of the agent as its only criterion, and the

more social application of Utilitarianism, with the attempt to secure the greatest good for the greatest number of persons over the greatest length of time. Pleasure is certainly a good thing, a thing worth seeking, but it is not "the good". It is good in its own way, but other things are also good, in their ways, such as the concrete things which we desire, and which give us pleasure because we desire them, and also such things as beauty, knowledge, and social life. None of these is a perfect good, or "the good", none includes the good of the rest, but each is good by virtue of its own nature and fulfillment of its correlative function in the totality of "the good".

Further, as Spencer points out, the notion of a "felicific calculus" is absurd, since the results of our actions go on into a vast and unpredictable future, if not forever. Such a prospect stultifies any proposal to estimate the total pleasure or pain which will result from any action we have performed or may contemplate.(1) If, on the other hand, we may limit the period under consideration to the present and more immediate future, conceding that the more remote effects are negligible, what is the rightness of an action, the pleasure of which is over, or the wrongness of one whose pain has passed? Neither our condition nor the condition of mankind as a whole will be altered in the least, and so it is difficult to see how we

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(1) Spencer, "The Ethics of the Gospel". p.228 f.

can commend or condemn logically, the act which caused it. It is not possible to regard something transient or temporal as the sufficient object of all action.

The Categorical Imperative proposed by Kant as the Moral criterion is all very well as a guide to action but it is purely formal in nature. It supplies no content for "the good", nothing but a dogmatic statement that one should "so act". Man has a natural and legitimate desire to know why he should; what is the object of action which makes it worth his while to bother about whether its basis would be desirable as a universal motivation or not; and this Kant does not provide. There is the further suggestion that it is quite possible that some actions might be morally right, which were not grounded upon what could be desired as a universal motivation. For example, it is morally justifiable for a man to devote his life to researches into the past merely to satisfy a natural curiosity, but for all men to do so would be disastrous.

The same criticism holds for what is often advanced as the Christian criterion, the Golden Rule. It too is purely formal, and taken alone cannot provide a sufficient ethical and moral measure, though, if it were observed by all men, there would probably be an improvement in the conditions of the world.

The "natural" criterion of Aristotle, adopted with little modification by the Scholastics and advocated by most Roman Catholic writers today, seems to fail on

two counts. If the good life consists in the due performance of function, there is no particular occasion to pay much attention to consciousness or intention. This is hardly in accord with the emphasis which Our Lord so insistently placed upon motives. And, secondly, the possibility of determining the "true" function of all things is extremely doubtful, and one may doubt whether it is not morally justifiable to use at least some things for other than their "natural" function. An example, though trivial in itself, may serve to show the plausibility of this contention. The "natural" function of the hair of a human being is to adorn and beautify the body. Whose body? Obviously the one on which it grows. Is it immoral for the Chinese to cut off their hair to make hairnets for Western women? That is not the natural function of the hair, and by cutting it off it is prevented from fulfilling its natural function, so that this cannot even be accorded the justification of a secondary use. One doubts, however, whether even the Scholastics would regard the Orientals as morally culpable, even if they persisted in cutting their hair after being told its natural function and so being unable to plead ignorance. The natural use of function is a helpful guide, but it will hardly serve as an ultimate criterion.

When we turn from such systems as we have been considering to the ethical teaching of Our Lord, we find a great difference in method. He provides us with no rigid criterion, although He formulates many principles

and draws many precepts from them. It is in His dealing with other men, however, that we find the greatest help in our investigation. He blessed those in whom he discerned the smallest beginnings of unselfishness and devotion, then called them to more difficult and higher tasks in the service of God and man.

There are two tendencies in man which lead him to the attempt to arrive at an ultimate criterion which shall be universally applicable. The first is the desire to formulate all his knowledge with mathematical simplicity and accuracy. This is illustrated in the attempts of such philosophers as Descartes, Spinoza, and Hobbes to present in mathematical form the sum total of all human knowledge. Further illustrations are to be found, in more recent times, in the attempts to reduce morality to anthropology, life to chemistry,and physics to logical syllogisms or mathematical formulae. The more usual tendency in philosophic circles today, as indicated by the increasing favor of the theories which go under the general title of "emergent evolution", is towards a recognition of a multiplicity of principles as ultimate, varying with the different levels. Such a recognition is necessarily involved in the doctrine that there is more in an organic whole than the simple summation of its parts. It follows that, while abstraction may present truth, it does not present the whole truth. Chemical formulae do not explain life, nor does the dis-

covery of the historical origin of an ethical theory in a primitive taboo explain why it is valid as an ethical principle here and now, nor demonstrate that it is of no greater obligation than a mere taboo. Over-simplification almost invariably robs facts of their true significance and cannot provide valid bases for ethical or metaphysical systems.

The other tendency is the desire of most men for an external authority, or, at least, an authority which will give them mathematical certainty, in both ethics and metaphysics. This desire is born of either laziness, or fear, or both; laziness which prompts a man to accept any solution which sounds reasonable, rather than look deeper for flaws or for a fundamental principle, or, and especially in the realm of ethics, the fear that he may not choose correctly, together with the feeling that he can "blame it on some-one-else" if he has an external authority. "The natural man (and there is a survival of the natural man in all of us) craves for external authority. He finds it hard to acquiesce in the dictum 'There shall no sign be given it'. And further we are conscious of the enormous difficulty of persuading the natural man to accept Christian standards of living except by the force of external authority. And for his sake we are tempted to discover or invent one. But the word 'tempted' may remind us that this was one of the temptations which assailed Our Lord, one of the possible policies

which in the wilderness He tested and rejected. And unless we are to be false to His method and disloyal to Himself we must accept His principle and follow His example. 'Neither will they believe though one rise from the dead.'" (1).

If we look more closely at the various criteria which have been suggested as ultimate principles, we shall discover why it is so difficult to settle upon any one of them as actually the criterion. Upon examination they seem to fall into a number of more or less clearly defined categories. For example, we find an ethic of custom or convention, an ethic of instinctive feeling or impulse, another of the fully developed personality, and again there are social ethics, altruistic ethics, ethics of self-realization, and the ethic of mysticism. These are, I think, the major categories. Let us glance at each one briefly.

First of all we notice that the categories are not exact correlatives. The first three relate more particularly to the method of arriving at moral judgments or decisions, while the rest are concerned more with the type of relationships one considers in connection with conduct. However, all of them have to be considered, as all have their place in the moral life.

In the first classification, the ethic of custom or convention, we have a close approach to the ancient tribal ethic of taboo. Certain things are right, others are wrong, and that is an end of the mat-

ter until the fashions change. In the meantime the voice of early training is the voice of God. One would probably be astounded to discover how much of the conduct of modern people is regulated by just such standards; an unreasoned acceptance of the ideas and ideals of the moment. If, perchance, others around us begin to do something that has been taboo, as, for example, going to "movies" on Sunday, we feel that we may do so also. However, this is still a blind following of the conduct of others, and has little or nothing to do with our own moral development, except in so far as it retards any progress in rational criticism.

The ethic of instinctive feeling or impulse, in spite of the disapproval of many moralists, really marks a decided advance over a merely conventional standard. It is the beginnings of self-expression, and, where the development is not allowed to stop there, it is far more apt to bring about a harmonious development of the personality than simple acquiescence in the current styles. The fact that one's impulses so often are in conflict with the conventions, and the following of them is so apt to lead to unpleasant results, is almost certain to lead to a critical comparison of the two, which means a rational examination of principles.

The ethics of the fully developed personality will naturally mean a rational examination of all the standards of conduct which are pertinent to a particu-

lar action, with a thorough understanding of ethical principles and motives, and the resultant action will be in accord with what the agent conceives to be the highest good.

Social and altruistic ethics are often confused, but there is a distinction. In the former, anything which contributes to the welfare of the social unit, an impersonal community, or to particular conditions in the community, is regarded as right. Anything, on the other hand, which works to the disadvantage of the community is wrong. Altruistic ethics, however, has as its standard the particular needs of particular persons. It is not nearly so general in its standard nor in its application, although it is social in a broad sense, in that it is primarily concerned with one's relations to others. As a matter of fact, one can hardly conceive an ethic which is not social in this respect, but there are considerable variations in the breadth of application, considerable enough to warrent the distinction in classification.

The ethic of self-realization is almost entirely personal in its application, meaning by "personal", that its major consideration is the agent himself. This, however, does not necessarily mean that it is selfish. "In the case of the Founder of Christianity the premature loss of immediate existence seems to have been the condition of the greatest effect ever produced upon the world by an individual. It was self-realization --- the realization of values accepted as supreme for the

self--- by sacrifice, and presents no difficulty in principle. The idea that self-realization implies some form of continued self-enjoyment is a mere consequence of thoughtless individualism". (1)

The ethic of mysticism need not detain us here, though we are willing to grant that it has a legitimate place in Christianity. It concerns few persons, and these in such an intimate way, that it cannot be regarded as of vital importance for all, nor could it possibly be considered as a universal criterion.

This brief survey will indicate what I believe to be one of the most important aspects of ethical investigation, that is, the practical impossibility of arriving at a single criterion which is universally applicable. As Milburn expresses it: "There are several quite distinct sides to the moral life and their standards are in practice incommensurate. These may all converge and harmonize in some transcendental realm, but they are incommensurate from an empirical standpoint, and only an indefinable 'phronesis', or moral wisdom, can tell us which point of view on any given occasion is the most urgent.....The right way, surely, to treat any moral problem is to approach it from all these points of view successively."(2)

Thus we are forced to the conclusion that, for practical purposes, there can be no such thing as an ultimate criterion in the form of a single standard. The singular form in the title of the essay may be re-

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(1) Bosanquet, "Some Suggestions in Ethics", p.148
(2) Milburn, "The ..."

tained for convenience, but it must be understood to mean a system of principles, rather than a single one. After all, even such an abstract system of thought as Euclidian geometry is based upon several axioms, and could not be deduced from a single one. Is it any wonder that one finds it impossible to find a single self evident truth which will involve within itself all the conditions of human life?

"It may be that criticism of morality first originates with a criticism of existing moral institutions or codes of ethics; such a criticism may be due to the spontaneous activity of the moral consciousness itself. But when such criticism passes into the attempt to find a universal criterion of morality --- such an attempt being in effect an effort to make morality scientific ---- and especially when the attempt is seen, as it must in the end be seen, to fail (the moral consciousness being superior to all standards of morality and realizing itself wholly in particular judgments) then ethics as a process of reflection upon the nature of the moral consciousness may be said to begin. If this be true it follows that one of the chief functions of ethics must be criticism. of mistaken attempts to find a criterion of morality superior to the pronouncements of the moral consciousness itself. The ultimate superiority of the moral consciousness over all other standards is recognized, even by those who impugn its authority, whenever they claim that all

men ought to recognize the superior value of the standards which they themselves wish to substitute. Similarly, their opponents refute their arguments by showing that they are based ultimately upon a recognition of certain distinctions which are moral distinctions..... and that these moral distinctions conflict with the conclusions which they reach." (1)

(We are not assuming all that is asserted in the preceeding quotation. It is merely given as a further opinion in favor of our conclusion. The question of the authority of the moral consciousness will be considered in the succeeding section.)

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(1) Williams, "Ethics", Enc. Brit. (Italics his.)

Part II

Authority

At the close of the preceeding section we were brought face to face with one of the most difficult problems of ethical investigation, namely, the nature of authority and the part to be accorded to it in the moral life. The controversy on the subject seems to be without end, and the fact that the opinions of experts are so much at variance must give us pause. We must examine carefully the arguments on both sides and do our best to see where the right lies, whether with one or another of the usual conclusions, or with none of them.

Perhaps one great difficulty in determining the nature of authority lies in the ambiguity of the word itself. It has a variety of different connotations, and it is almost impossible to determine which is meant when one speaks of authority in the moral life. In the first place (first because it is the most prominent in contemporary thought) we have the authority of the "big stick", the sort of authority that is typified by the policeman with his badge, night-stick, and revolver. It is, again, the kind of authority which is most familiar to the school-child in matters of discipline; and, what is still more vital to the Christian Church and any other institution or person interested

in international affairs, the kind of authority which Great Britain or the United States can and does wield in Peace Conferences, the League of Nations, and such international councils. The authority of power is observed, for the most part, because of fear of the consequences.

Closely related to this sort of authority is that of convention, or social opinion. It is that which dissuades one from eating with his knife in polite society or removing his coat while sitting in the orchestra of the Metropolitan Opera House or in Saint Thomas' Church. Here again it is largely the fear of consequences which provides the deterrent, although the consequences are not so much of a physical nature. Ostracism from one's social circle,or the manifest disapproval of friends or even of strangers is, for many people, as severe punishment as imprisonment or a beating.

Different from either of these is the connotation of the word when we speak of a man as being an authority in a particular line of investigation or knowledge, as, for example, a surgeon who is an authority on cranial operations, or a mechanic who is an authority on airplane motors. The respect which is accorded the opinions of such men is not based, as a rule, upon fear of consequences, but upon the fact that

we realize that they have devoted a great deal of time and ability to acquiring a knowledge of their field, and that their knowledge is more complete and more accurate than could be that of a layman in the same field. We are willing to listen to them and act upon their opinions; in fact, we often seek their opinions as a basis for action, but there is no power which can force us to believe them or to use their pronouncements as a basis for action. Faith in them is based upon a recognition of their superior knowledge and experience in a field which we have not the time, ability, or inclination to investigage to the same extent for ourselves.

There is a transitional type of authority between this one and the one we shall mention next. Recognition is taken of authorities in the field of art, on painting, on sculpture, drama, poetry, prose, and music. When this means merely a knowledge based upon study of historic aesthetic expressions, as an authority on Egyptian painting or Greek sculpture, the designation means practically the same as in the case last mentioned. However, when it comes to the matter of appreciation, or of aesthetic judgment, something more is involved. Aesthetic appreciation is made up of an emotional element of satisfaction or dissatisfaction and an intellectual element which enables one to determine why a particular example does satisfy or fails to do so. It is based somewhat, it is true, upon knowledge of expressions at various periods of

the world's history and upon what other critics have considered good or poor, but there is also the subjective factor in appreciation, the feeling or reaction which one has to a particular picture, statue or play. This element is subject to influence by experience and advice from others, but in the last analysis, it is purely personal and accounts in large measure for one's opinions of particular artistic pieces. Thus one's acceptance or rejection of the opinions of "authorities" in artistic appreciation or criticism is not based entirely upon an objective criterion, but more especially upon the subjective reactions to the same subjects.

Some may object to designating as authority the recognition which is accorded to the advice of a friend, or a person whom one admires a great deal, or, at times, even to the advice of a stranger. However, one uses such advice as a basis of action, and usually with considerable confidence that the results will justify his acceptance of it. What more can one say of authority of any other sort, except the authority of power? I think the designation is appropriate, and shall call it the authority of personality to distinguish it from the other types. There are several elements which enter into personal influence and it will be well for us to consider them, as they will have a bearing upon the rest of the discussion. First,

there is the manner in which the advice is given. One who shows evidence of being perfectly sincere and thoroughly convinced of the accuracy of his information will have far more influence, even though he be a stranger, than one who is obviously doubtful or who has "an ax to grind". With friends our previous experience with the particular person involved will have considerable effect upon the weight accorded to his advice. If we know him to be a "busy-body", more concerned with other people's affairs than with his own, we are not apt to pay much attention when he offers suggestions concerning our conduct. On the other hand, if he is known to order his own life well (i.e., in accordance with our ideas of what is a good life) we are apt to regard his suggestions as, at least, worth consideration. Previous experience will also affect us in accordance with the variance between our ideas and those of the person offering the advice, and with the success we have had in previous cases in which we have followed the lead of this particular person.

Still another type of authority affecting people a great deal is that of signs, whether of apparently magical nature performed by a person, or those of popular superstition. These need not concern us a great deal except in so far as this type is related to the last one we shall mention, the authority of revelation. Most of the great religions of history are based upon the authority of a knowledge alleged to have

been received, in the first instance, by special revelation. Sometimes it is in the form of a dream, sometimes a mystic trance, or a vision. In the case of Christianity the consummation of its revelation is in the life of a historic person, Jesus Christ, and it is recorded by contemporaries some of whom, at least, were His companions during His life on earth. There is a vast difference in the weight we can accord to such a revelation and the story of one person of a dream or vision he has had. Almost anyone could concoct the story of a dream or vision in order to lend weight to an idea he desired to have accepted, as was almost certainly the case with Mohamed in the development of his doctrines and his ecclesiastical system, but it is inconceivable that any one man or group of men could have invented such a record as we find in the New Testament.

The question we have to face is this: which of these types of authority may we as Christians use in determining the nature of the moral criterion and, when we have settled upon it in convincing others? As we turn the pages of history we find that the Church has employed, at one time or another, practically all of them. The most usual type for the determination of the criterion has been the last named, the authority of revelation. Taking the Bible as the direct and unadulterated Word of God, many and varied attempts have been made to construct from it a complete code of ethics. Then to enforce the code the Church has been guilty of resort to force, the

authority of power, to make people accept its moral pronouncements, as well as to accept its religious doctrines. Need we mention the Inquisition, and the Geneva Theocracy or Puritan government of early New England to show that both Catholic and Protestant have been guilty? On many occasions, also, the Church has resorted to signs and wonders to persuade people to accept its teaching; and individuals in the Church have been guilty, far too often, of producing these signs by fraud. The Priest in the Confessional exercises the authority of the expert in the field of morals, and the Preacher in the Pulpit attempts persuasion by personality. Fear of consequences is far too often used as a motive on the basis of revelation, where the Church cannot, or does not choose to exercise the authority of "the big stick" -- such is the use of threats of eternal damnation to persuade people to be "good". And of exactly the same nature is the use of promises of future blessedness for the same purpose.

Thus we have precedent for the use of practically every form of authority one can imagine, and all in the name of the Christian Church. Often, it is true, the name is assumed by those who have no right to use it, as when an individual, whether priest or layman, claims to be representing the voice of the whole Church in order to lend support to one of his own private ideas. But the Church as a whole, or a large portion of it, has been at fault far more often than would have been the case if it had been consistent in all things with the teachings of the Master. Let us turn to Him for help on this

question of authority.

At the end of the Sermon on the Mount in St. Matthew's Gospel we find this note: "The multitudes were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes." (1) How are we to interpret the word "authority" in this passage? Certainly the scribes did not hesitate to claim authority for their teaching. Was it not based upon the final authority for the Jews, the Law, the verbal record of God's will, regarded by many of them as superior to God Himself? The teaching of Jesus could not claim any such authority, for it carried with it the implied, if not expressed, abrogation of many of the precepts of the Law. He did claim to teach the real, inner spirit of the Law, but to the legalistic mind of the majority of Jews the breach of any ceremonial precept was as grave an offence as the breach of the commandment against murder. It is true that there were many Jews, both of this period and earlier, who were not so legalistic in their interpretation, but it was not the case with the majority, and especially with the Pharasaic school which was so rapidly gaining favor. The authority of the scribes was the authority of the Law, and it carried with it the weight of public opinion, backed up by legal penalties. The authority which is here accorded to the teaching of

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(1) Matt. vii.28 f.

Our Lord could not have been of this nature.

Nor could it have been an authority based upon the recognition of His ability to perform miracles. We have numerous recorded instances of His refusal to use this method of persuading people to accept His teaching. The first one, and one which is typical, since it is the record of His own feelings on the subject, is the record of His temptations, especially the one to throw Himself down from the Temple. In it we have His refusal to test His own faith by forcing God to give Him a sign, and quite possibly, considering the place mentioned, a refusal to persuade others by such a sign. Furthermore, this statement, here and in the other two Synoptic records (1), is prior to any recorded public miracle. (The Fourth Gospel, of course, records the miracle at the marriage feast at Cana before any parallel to this statement). Though one cannot base too much upon the assumption of a chronological order observed by the Synoptists, this at least adds weight to the other evidence in favor of our contention.

The notion of Our Lord using physical force to secure approbation for His ideas is almost too absurd to mention. In the one example which comes close to it, the cleansing of the Temple, it was not used for this purpose, but to right what He considered to be a great wrong, the improper use of the house dedicated to the worship of God. In what is, so far as I am

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(1) Matt. vii.28f., Mk.i.22, Lk.iv.32.

aware, the only recorded claim of His to the power to summon a force from Heaven to aid Him, He refused to exercise the power. (1). At the same time He rebuked one of His companions for attempting to resist His arrest by physical means. There is, also, every reason to believe that He might have been the leader of a revolt of the people against the Roman authorities, a revolt which might have been successful, for a time at least, and so have been in a position to put His ideas into effect as a popular leader. There is considerable evidence that such an idea was in the minds of His immediate followers on several occasions, and that He was at considerable pains to prevent the crowds from proclaiming Him as King. It is impossible to suppose that the evangelist could have had such a notion in mind when he recorded the statement we are considering.

We know practically nothing of the boyhood and early manhood of Our Lord. There is no way to find out what His intellectual training may have been, but we may be pretty certain that it was not the training which the scribes received and which St. Paul had. He probably learned the Scriptures as any Jewish boy was expected to learn them, but it is very improbable that His training in them was anything like as exacting as that given to those who were to devote their lives to exposition and teaching. The training of a scribe began while he was still a youth and continued well into early manhood, and

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(1) Matt. xxvi.53.

almost invariably a large part of the work was done at Jerusalem, at the feet of one of the great Rabbis. We have no record of Our Lord visiting Jerusalem from the time He was twelve years of age until the beginning of His ministry, though it is probable that He did come to the city a number of times for the great feasts. However, if He had spent anything like the time there which was regarded as requisite for scribal training we would almost certainly have some mention of it. Now the scribes, or Rabbis (scribes who devoted their time to teaching) were regarded as the authorities on matters of morality and religion on the basis of their knowledge of the Scriptures. They were experts in the Law which was the ground of all morality and religion. Such could not have been the authority ascribed to Our Lord, although He shows considerable knowledge of the Scriptures. His academic knowledge was no more considerable than that of the average Jew, but His understanding of the spirit, it appears, was superior to that of any Jew of His day and probably of any time prior to it.

We have left only the authority of personality, as we called it, and it is here that I think we shall find our answer. The manner in which Our Lord taught showed His absolute conviction that He was right, His perfect sincerity, and His conviction that it was of vital importance for His hearers to believe Him and act accordingly. We have no way of knowing where the evangelist got the statement, but in all probability it repre-

sents more than the immediate impression of the people present on that occasion. It is quite likely that those who knew Him intimately realized that He not only taught this type of ethics but that He also lived it. He presented, in His life, the strongest argument for His teaching, in that He really "practiced what He preached"; His conduct was absolutely consistent with His precept and principle. There is no stronger evidence of conviction and sincerity than this, the willingness to be subject one's self to the ideal which one presents for the acceptance of others, nor is there a better way to achieve results. "Everybody who has ever had to deal with human beings, and especially with children, knows that conscious and continual attempts at improvement by means of precepts bring about the opposite of the desired results. For every man has his just part of self-esteem which tells him that he alone is to mould himself, so that he refuses to become the subject of any individual; the only superior whom he admits is the highest source, which is the common origin of himself and the rest, and which is manifested to him in a pure form in the shape of other individuals, and of these alone, in so far as these serve for an unconscious pattern." (1) (One might wish that if everybody knows this important psychological fact, as Prof. Driesch suggests, that some of them would show more evidence of their knowledge.)

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(1) Driesch, "Ethical Principles", p.108

May we be permitted another quotation in support of this conclusion?

"The value and impressiveness of any moral teacher's work cannot be adequately estimated by isolated sayings. A moral ideal is a connected whole, and this whole is best presented by the picture of a character and a life. Even the ideal considered as so much precept can hardly be appreciated apart from the character of the teacher. Still less can the moral effect of the teaching be separated from the impression made by the teacher's life. The ethical importance of Christ and of the religion which He founded is based not merely upon the intrinsic value of His teaching, but upon the picture of a life which seems to be in complete harmony with that teaching.....the influence of a Person is stronger than that of an idea. This is a very important point to be born in mind in estimating the moral healthiness of a religious system which places the teaching of an historical Person who lived in the remote past in the forefront of its ethical ideal". (1)

Undoubtedly there were some of Our Lord's hearers and followers who accepted His teaching because of the miracles He performed, but we contend that the only authority which He sought to exercise, aside from the intrinsic appeal of the teaching itself, was the authority of His own personality, His sincerity, con-

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(1) Rashdall, "Conscience and Christ". p. 116.

viction, and example.

We must now consider the grounds on which Our Lord Himself based the conviction that His ethical teaching was in accord with the will of God, while so much of the current teaching of the Jews was not. This involves a problem of New Testament criticism a full discussion of which would be out of place here, namely, the question of Christ's Messianic consciousness. We cannot be sure when He knew of a certainty that He was the Messiah promised to the Jews, but it is probable that He did not realize the full significance of His vocation until fairly late in the ministry. However, it is evident, if we can accept the story in the latter part of the second chapter of St. Luke's Gospel, that He realized when He was still a lad that His relationship to God the Father was a special one, not enjoyed by all. He undoubtedly spent considerable time pondering over this conviction, wondering what it meant both in regard to Himself and to the work He should do in the world. He finally arrived at the conclusion that His relationship to God the Father as that of a Son to a loving Father, was the relationship in which all men should stand to God; and further, that it was incumbent upon Him to broadcast this knowledge to the world, or at least, to his fellow countrymen. Whether this conviction dominated His study of the Law, or was reached as a result of that study, or was simply born out by the evidence He found in the Law,

we can never know. We do know, however, that His teaching concerning the Law and the Prophets was in full accord with the ethics which He based upon His conviction that His relationship to God was the only true one, and that His most violent objections to the current Jewish teaching were to just those portions which were so patently out of harmony with such a relationship. Thus His ethical principles were derived from His religious belief which, so far as we are able to determine, was the result of intuition or direct revelation, for there does not seem to have been any such teaching current at the time. It might, of course, have been deduced from certain portions of the Old Testament, especially the Prophets, or some of the apocryphal books then current, but if so it is surprising that no one else had arrived at the same conclusion.

Of course the conviction that He was the Messiah would carry with it a faith in His ability to read God's will and the idea that His vocation was to teach it to others, since the consistent tradition was to the effect that the Messiah was also to be a prophet. But, as we said, we cannot determine for certain when He arrived at this conviction, whether it was before He began to teach or considerably later, and it is to be observed that He insisted that His immediate followers, when they learned the truth about Him, should not let it be known. One reason, of course, was the jeopardy in which such a

revelation would place His life, a danger He did not wish to incur until He had completed His task of organizing a group of disciples to carry on His work. However, it is legitimate to assume that He had another reason in mind as well, namely, the fact that He wished His teaching to be accepted on the authority for which we have already argued, rather than upon the authority which would be accorded to Him in His role as Messiah if it were publicly known.

It is difficult and somewhat dangerous to draw inferences from Our Lord's methods of arriving at conclusions, especially in the fields of religion and morals, to the methods of ordinary men. He was a unique Person, holding within Himself the two Natures, human and divine. No other man has been or ever can be, so far as we can know, God Incarnate. What difference there may be between His powers of observation, deduction, and susceptibility to God's voice and that of ordinary human beings we cannot know. However, we are taught that He was Perfect Man, and that He was Human in every sense of the term. Otherwise we could not look to Him as our example, for how could we ever expect to even approach the character and conduct of Divinity which only <u>appeared</u> human? We have every reason to suppose that He attained knowledge in the same manner that we do; that He was mistaken in some things which He thought, as, for example, in His belief in the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch; and that there were some things which He did not know, as the date and time of the

end of the world and the final judgment. In other words, His religious beliefs were essentially based upon an act of faith, just as ours are; the chief difference being that His faith was sufficiently strong and His insight sufficiently clear to enable Him to perceive the full implications of the faith and to carry them out in practice. When He found that His faith did work out in actual life it was just that much added weight to His conviction that it was grounded in the Ultimate Truth of the Universe, and so it would be with all of us if we were actually to practice the faith in God as our Loving Father and Christ as the Savior of mankind. It would still be faith, but so altered from the timid thing we are apt to call faith that we would not recognize it, and would be more sure of the truth of it than of the things which we can actually perceive with our five senses.

Thus, anyone's ethical ideal, in order to be a consistent part of his rational system, must be grounded in his idea of the Ultimate Reality in, above, and behind the universe. In the last analysis this idea is an intuition or act of faith. It may seem to be and may actually be very real knowledge, but it is impossible to give a demonstrative proof of the fact. However, this is not intended to imply that one's whole ethical system is intuited, and still less the application of the system to life, which we have called morality, is a matter of simple intuition. The solution of problems,

whether moral or otherwise, calls for the use of man's distinguishing characteristic, his reason. So the development of an ethical system from his idea of the Ultimate Reality, and consistent with that idea, calls for rational activity, and we believe this to have been just as true of Our Lord as it is of ourselves.

When it comes to teaching others the content of our ethical ideal and our moral judgments as to the right way to apply it to particular situations I am persuaded that we cannot do better than the method used by Our Lord Himself. This conclusion is based, not upon the apparent authority given to this method by the fact that He is recorded to have used it, but upon experience in dealing with people, and the discovery that it is the most effective way to teach, as well as being, in our opinion, the most moral. The reasons for the latter opinion will appear later. (1) If, as we believe to be the case, the basis upon which any consistent ethical system is based is an intuition, or possibly several of them, then it follows that the final decision rests with the individual, and him alone. First principles are usually spoken of as self evident, since they cannot be demonstrated to be true, but what seems to be self evident to one person quite often does not seem so to another, and often no amount of persuasion or argument can make it do so. Where this is the case the most effective, probably the only type of authority which can be effective, is the authority of per-

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(1) See pages 46f., 76, and 104f.

sonality; the authority of a satisfactory life lived on the basis of such an ethic and such a faith. The Christian Church has, as its chief example, of course, the personality of Jesus. In addition it has the lives of countless happy, contented, and good people, both of the past and present. The only authority which it is legitimate for the Church or any individual in the Church to use in an attempt to persuade others to accept and live according to its Way is this authority of personality; primarily that of Jesus, then those of the saints, and finally, but of very considerable importance, the personalities and lives of its official and lay members. Such an authority, exercised by all of the Christians in the world, would be far more effective in the spread of the Kingdom of Heaven than appeals to Scripture or Council, to Priestly power or fear of Hell, or the use of force or fraud.

It follows that the ethical and moral teaching of Christ is authoritative for Christian people today in so far, and only in so far, as it appeals to their moral consciousness. He left us no detailed ethical code, although there have been many attempts to find one in His teaching. His failure to do so is an indication of His own moral insight. Any code which He might have left would have had to meet the same test that the teaching He did leave must meet, that is, it would have to be found in accord with the moral consciousness of the present day before it could be accorded the authority of moral law. And it was just in His opposition to a

moral law which had been transformed into superstitious scruple that Christ differed so radically from the Judaism into which He was born. "Any subjugation stultifies the Christian principle altogether, however neutral in itself the act may be.(1) It is no refutation of this principle to call it antinomianism; Christian ethics are antinomian."(2) And this is true not only in regard to the ethical principles or system, but also in its application. Priests can and should be, through their training and experience, authorities in the field of Moral Theology, but theirs is only an authority of the expert, plus the authority of their own personality. There is very good reason why people in doubt concerning a moral problem should seek advice from an expert, just as they would consult a physician in a case of illness. But they can no more be forced to accept the ruling of one than the other. The Priest can, and in some cases may withhold absolution, but for him to do so when he is persuaded that the person is morally convinced, after a careful study of the problem, that he is right and the traditional position of the Church is wrong, is, in my opinion an abuse of the privilege which the Church accords to its official representative. The individual conscience is the final authority, and to be moral it must be free, not in the metaphysical sense, but free from externally imposed laws and judgments. To act

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(1) Gal.v.2

(2) Milburn, "The Theology of the Real", p.124.

contrary to the dictates of conscience is itself morally wrong, and for a Priest to attempt to persuade anyone to act in such a manner by barring him from the sacraments of the Church is to attempt to make him sin.

"Of course it is absolutely true that the significance of such antinomianism is determined by its moral context, and that context in Christianity is constituted by such principles as the ambition to be spiritually minded, the recognition of Jesus as Lord, and the conviction that love is the fulfillment of all true law. But this is very far from amounting to a rejection of 'antinomianism'. Everyone must decide for him-or her-self whether or not, for instance, it is right to go to Church or to attend Mass. And the same is true with regard to all acts which are not obvious offences against one's neighbors, even when, from some points of view, it is admitted that they are morally objectionable. And to say this does not mean that none of these things matter, but that the individual Christian must be responsible for ruling his own life, and not consider that all questions can be settled by proxy upon the authority of the Church or of society. It is for 'the Church' -- i.e., all ecclesiastical authorities, teachers, etc., not only to be themselves free, but also to treat all other men as free, 'commending ourselves (and our message) to every man's (free) conscience in the sight of God'." (1)

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(1) Milburn, "The Theology of the Real", p.124. Cf. II Cor. iv.2.

The difficulty in the application of general principles to particular cases lies in the fact that moral problems always arise out of concrete situations in which an indefinite number of elements are present, both in the personality of the person involved, and in the physical characteristics of the situation. No two problems are exactly identical, for there are no identical personalities, and there is always the difference of time or place at least in the physical facts. I have heard physicians and nurses remark that few things cause more excitement around a hospital than what they call a "text book case", i.e., a case which is identical with the typical cases discussed in the text books. How much more would this be true of moral cases in which so many elements in addition to the purely physical enter.

"We can see why, when we leave the general nature of the good and come to the question of what is right for me, moral philosophy (what we have called "ethics') can no longer help us. It is.....a question of method. Your life is a construction, and though general elements enter into it, a unique and creative construction. No one but yourself really knows your materials and your situations, and he could not know all of them that there is to be known unless he was absolutely one with yourself. We find it in the giving of advice. The recipient can produce from his inner experience consideration upon consideration such as to

turn his adviser's conclusions in any direction to which he desires and the drift of his personality are leading him. Rabelais' portrayal of a man thus receiving advice whether or no to marry, and reversing his adviser's conclusion at every sentence through several close-printed pages, goes deep into the heart of the subject. In a word, your moral conclusion must issue from your whole self, and be inspired by the convictions which dominate your life and determine your special outlook on your special situation.....This may be put in other words by pointing out that general deductions applied to moral complications or conflicts of duty can only be stated in the form of hypothetical cases. But there is no sound inference from hypothetical cases to entire individual situations. No hypothesis can exhaust the whole circumstances, and the circumstance omitted may prove to be just the decisive factor. In all dealings with concrete life hypothetical cases are a dangerous source of fallacy. Of course your own case, when you state it in words to your adviser, becomes a hypothetical case. It is cut off from the full reality, and might be printed as an example in a text book". (1)

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(1) Bosanquet, "Some Suggestions in Ethics". p.154,ff.

Part III

Obligation.

Two of the most used and most frequently abused words in ethical and moral writings are the word "obligation" and its synonym "duty". It is upon one abuse of them that Mr. Prichard bases his conclusion that Moral Theology, in the usual meaning of the term, is based upon a mistake. "If, as is almost universally the case, by Moral Philosophy is meant the knowledge that would satisfy this demand (for proof that we ought to do so and so), there is no such knowledge, and all attempts to attain it are doomed to failure because they rest on a mistake, the mistake of supposing the possibility of proving what can only be apprehended directly by an act of moral thinking. Nevertheless the demand, though illigitimate, is inevitable until we have carried the process of reflection far enough to realize the self-evidence of our obligations, i.e. the immediacy of our apprehension of them". (1)

Here Mr. Prichard is merely reechoing what has been a common-place of ethical thought since the days of Kant, the "manifest authority of the Moral Law", a fact of morality, the importance of which cannot be over-estimated. But Kant's discussion culminates in the Categorical Imperative which, as we saw above (2), is

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(1) Mind, New Series, Vol. xxi. p.36.

(2) See page 17.

a purely formal rule of method. It might be worded as follows, without changing its meaning: "One must choose, in every situation, the best course of action, i.e., that which tends towards the highest values". For the content of the "highest good" or the nature of the "highest values" we search the "Critique of Practical Reason" in vain. If Mr. Prichard means to intimate, as he seems to, that this content, the principles upon which the choice is to depend, or the right course of action in each situation, are also apprehended immediately, or are self-evident, we cannot agree with him. Although the obligation to choose the best course of action in every situation is an immediate apprehension of all normal men, unless it has been stultified by disuse, the general principles of the ethical system of a really moral person, and the application of these principles to action are the results of rational thought and not simple intuition. Conscience "pricks" when one knows that he has not acted according to his knowledge of the best, or when he acts without giving sufficient thought to the situation and while still in doubt as to what is best. When one believes he has acted as he ought, i.e., done the best according to his knowledge of the highest values, Conscience gives its full approbation, even though others, possibly all others, feel that he has acted immorally. The subject himself may later come to the conclusion that he was wrong but, even so, his conscience at the time of action will not reveal the fact to him.

Prof. Driesch gives us a helpful suggestion in distinguishing "pity" from "duty". "That part of ethical consciousness which usually is called pity is turned upon the general fact that a subject is a "member in general" (of supra-personal order) -- that is, that it is "man" (or, to an even wider view, that it is a living being.) A better name for Pity might be a 'loving fellowship of life'. It is at this point that the Christian concept of neighbor comes into play.

"Duty always refers to the fact that a subject is the particular member which he is; it is wholly personal and is intuited in a manner which is valid for the individual alone. Scheler here rightly uses the expression, 'that which is absolutely valid-- for me'." (1)

The concepts of guilt and sin are directly related to this notion of duty or obligation. There is no such thing as unwitting or unconscious sin and, although one may act wrongly from the point of view of theoretical ethics, if he has made an honest effort to act rightly, and believes in his own heart that he has done so, he is not morally guilty. As Laird expresses the same idea: "Honest and conscientious mistakes concerning the best actions are not merely possible, but very frequent; and therefore there is a difference between what we take to be the best use of ourselves, and what really is the best. Where this exists, we

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(1) Driesch, "Ethical Principles", p.34. (Italics his).

commonly hold that, although a man is mistaken, he still ought to follow his best beliefs. He has this obligation. To be sure we endeavor to soften the discrepancy wherever we can. There is so much uncertainty concerning human conduct, we say, that even the plainest error (to all seeming) may sometimes be truth after all, or a smaller error than the plainer "duty". We may not know all the circumstances which the agent knows. It is well for us, so far as possible, to refrain from judging our fellows, and let them follow their own determinations. Indeed, since the only species of morality that is truly practicable or inherently sound demands, in the last instance, that each man is the final judge of his own obligations, it is necessary if not quite accurate, to speak always as if the obligations which any man, after due consideration, takes to be his, really are his from a moral standpoint. In short, the question is not simply whether a man is the vehicle and instrument of excellence, but, still more importantly, whether he directs himself, and consciously, towards this end as well as he may." (1)

Since obligations are of so purely a personal nature it follows that the only obligations, with the possible exception of the purely formal one to choose the best in every situation, are those which a man assumes himself. This is of special importance in the case of so called "obligations to the state" or "to society". "A

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(1) "A Study in Moral Theory", p.204. (Italics his)

man can bind only himself,and cannot be bound by others. It is only in democracy that the individual is a *member* and not an *object* in the state.....it is only the *citizen* but *not* the subject, who has *duties* towards the state." (1) The same thing is true of other social units; only those contracts which a man makes himself, or which are made for him by an authorized agent are binding, either legally or morally.

However, this proposition must not be taken to mean more than it actually does mean. The exigencies of society demand that obligations that are implicitely or tacitly assumed, especially when the agent intends to give the impression that he is assuming them, must be fulfilled, even though there is no explicit promise to do so. The oft quoted statement to the effect that every opportunity or privilege involves an obligation is perfectly true, and the embracing of the opportunity or the exercise of the privilege is a tacit assumption of the obligation. Thus, in the state, the use of public facilities, such as police protection, the city streets, etc., involves the obligation of paying the taxes necessary to provide them. The amount of the tax may well be a matter for debate, but the obligation to pay taxes is one which a citizen, by the mere fact of claiming citizenship or exercising the privileges which go with the status, cannot morally, not to mention legally, disregard. In like manner, one who joins a social group,

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(1) Driesch, "Ethical Principles", p.137 (Italics, first two his, rest mine).

such as a Club or a Lodge, by the very act of joining assumes the obligation of living up to the regulations of the group. The Church is a social group, in one sense, and anyone who publicly joins it or asserts his membership, or exercises any of the privileges which membership offers, thereby assumes certain obligations. For example, he should do nothing in his capacity as Church member which he knows to be contrary to the principles of the Church. Since membership in the Church involves a man's whole life, all of his conduct, it follows that he should never do anything contrary to its principles. If it should happen that he felt himself morally obliged to act in a manner which he believed to be contrary to the corporate mind of the Church as a whole, and if he was unable to adjust the conflict to the satisfaction of his conscience, even after consulting an official representative of the Church, loyalty would require that he give up his membership, at least until the two principles involved could be held together consistently, without any violation of his conscience. The great difficulty in this situation lies in the determination of the corporate mind of the Church upon principles which are apt to conflict with the principles of any conscientious man. But this difficulty has its advantage in the fact that it is seldom necessary for a man to withdraw from communion with the Church on the ground of moral divergences.

So far we have been dealing with duty, aside from the formal obligation of choosing the best in every situation, as that which a man is obliged to do by his own agree-

ment, whether expressed or implied. In so doing we have been dealing with morality at its lowest point. "We must not confuse the moral law with the moral ideal. Duty is the minimum of morality; the supreme moral ideal of the best man is its maximum". (1)

As we saw in the quotation from Prof. Driesch (2) there is an element in morality, which he calls pity, but which I prefer to call benevolence, and to take in the active or objective sense, rather than the subjective; i.e., as meaning "good-willing", rather than simply "good-will". The Church Catechism mentions as the first items in "The Duty towards God" and "The Duty towards my Neighbor" Our Lord's summary of the Law. This is using duty in an entirely different sense from that in which we have been considering it, for the "Law of Love" is the maximum of morality, as the moral ideal of the best Man, Jesus Christ. It is an obligation upon those who are willing to assume it, that is upon those who would call themselves Christians, but it is a very abstract one. The interpretation of it will occupy a large portion of the next section of this essay.

Obligation, or duty, as we have been considering them, are usually assumed for the privileges or opportunities involved. Far from being free gifts to society, they, for the most part, are payment for full value received, or <u>vice versa</u>, the privileges and opportuni-

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(1) Scott, "New Testament Ethics", p.71. (quoted from Westmark, Cit.Montefiore, "The Old Testament and after".)

(2) See page 52.

ties are considered full payment for the obligations assumed. To illustrate let us use a passage from Prof. Scott, who quotes Ruskin, although he realizes that he is not a popular authority in the field of morals today: "'If your work is first with you any your fee second, work is your master and the lord of work, who is God. But if fee is first with you and your work second, fee is your master and the lord of fee, who is the devil. And it makes a difference now and ever whether you serve him who has on his vesture written 'King of kings' and whose service is perfect freedom or him on whose vesture is written 'Slave of slaves' and whose service is perfect slavery' (Unto this last, p. 57). The principle applies equally to duty done by constraint and to duty done for reward. Love prompts and inspires to do more than duty and to do all that is done in the spirit of sonship, 'all for love and nothing for reward'. The converse is crystallized in the apophthegm of Edward Thring: 'Quench love by saying, pay up your pound and I will give you a receipt for duty done'". (1)

The formal obligation which we mentioned early in this section involves a derivitive one, obligatory upon all who recognize the first, but I fear that far too few people give the derivitive any serious consideration. If it is obligatory upon me to choose the best in every situation, then it is also obligatory for me to make every effort to determine what is best. In other words,

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(1) Scott, "New Testament Ethics", p.68

the person who really desires to lead a moral life must determine, to the best of his ability, what are the highest values, the principles of his own ethical system, and conscientiously apply them to problems as they arise. "There may be a very manifest and quite inescapable difference between what really is the best that some given agent can do and what that agent takes to be the best. Certainly we may maintain with a good deal of reason that what anyone can do is, in the most important case, what he can do intentionally (on the ground that, psychologically speaking, this conscious direction of conduct is the normal and fundamental governance of human action). To this much may be added. It is to be remembered, for example, that one of the things which a moral agent usually can do and ought to do, is to inform himself, not without adequacy, concerning his resources and opportunities. Again, since the conscious enjoyment of good things seems to be an essential ingredient in most that is to be accounted welfare, there is a strong presumption in favor of the view that our conscious experience is concerned not merely with the direction, but also with the sustenance and, indeed, with the very tissue and substance of attainable human good". (1)

Milburn has a classification of moral judgments which indicates the direction in which this development takes place:

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(1) Laird, "A Study in Moral Theory", p.203

"(a) The recognition of, and acquiescense in, an unassimilated, but incorporated, prohibition or taboo. Infantile morality.

"(b) The expression of instinctive feeling giving moral quality to act or feeling judged; the expression of the raw material of moral selfhood. Adolescent morality.

"(c) The expression of reasoned, criticised conviction. Adult morality.

"Instinctive morality is an essential and permanent element in moral self-hood, and the fact that the presence of any feeling is recognized and deliberately approved may be quite sufficient justification for it.

"Adult morality, so far as it is realized, involves the total elimination of infantile morality. It is an essential and important part of ethics to clarify and rationalize the moral judgments. Every taboo must be challenged, and if it is not found to correspond with our reasoned conclusions, or with our really own instinctive feelings, it should be discarded. Moral freedom is emancipation from mere taboo". (1)

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(1) "The Theology of the Real", p.117

Part IV

Ethical Principles.

(a) General Considerations.

In this section we propose to consider some of the primary principles of ethics with a view to establishing a system which may serve as a possible criterion for the moral life. Before we proceed, however, there are several things we should bear in mind. In the first place, it follows from our conclusions on the subjects of authority and obligation that any system which we may develop must stand upon its own merits. Once one leaves the metaphysical field in ethical discussion the argument assumes the nature of a confession. It can claim only the authority of its appeal to the ethical and moral consciousness of the reader or hearer, and the only obligation which it can impose is that which he is willing to assume on the basis of this appeal. This may be regarded as an expression of humility on the part of the writer, but even more, it is the expression of a sincere conviction concerning the nature of ethical and moral authority and obligation.

Holding this conviction one might well be asked, "Why all this bother then? If each man has to develop his own system, what is the use of suggesting one to him which may not appeal at all?" There are a number of reasons. In the first place, there is no better way to find out where one stands oneself than to put it down in black and white. Also there is

only one way to persuade any one that it is worth while to study ethics or morals, and that is to start him thinking on the subject. To start him thinking it is necessary that he have something to think about, and what better than an ethical system. A knowledge and consideration of principles is essential to a really moral life. The only way to graduate from "Infantile morality" (1) is to bring before the bar of criticism the prohibitions, taboos, and commandments and to criticize them one must have principles to use as a basis. These are the chief reasons, but one might think of many more.

How does one arrive at ethical principles? We have already said that the primary ones are largely, if not entirely, intuitional. However, one is not apt to intuit them unless one is thinking about the subject of ethics. The comparatively infrequent cases of mystical insight or inspiration may be regarded as examples, but even here there is a question, from the psychological point of view, whether one ever has an inspiration or a vision on a subject about which he has never thought. I think Laird makes a helpful suggestion when he says (2): "On the whole it is the examined life that instructs us here, and its principles are elicited from individual searchings of the heart and of the conscience. For this there is a reason entirely sufficient. When a man finds himself faced with a

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(1) See page 58 f.

(2) "A Study in Moral Theory",p.9.

moral alternative he knows that he is faced with a problem that in principle is general. To have moral experience is therefore to encounter some principle, and every moral act implies the use of principle and some knowledge of it. Since every responsible being has to train himself in moral matters, he has therefore to train himself in moral principles. Accordingly, in his degree he is a moralist and an expert. In short, anyone who takes account of his actions should also take account of his principles."

In effect this is to say that the method of moral and ethical ratiocination is essentially the scientific method. From the observation of certain data, or from logical deductions from prior theories or established facts, the scientist forms a new theory. This he subjects to all conceivable tests, bringing all the knowledge of the particular field to bear upon it, and only when it has met these tests under all possible conditions does he accept it as a new fact. However, many scientific theories are incapable of proof, due to the nature of the conditions involved. In spite of this fact the theories are used as hypotheses, and attempts are made to explain other observed data of the field upon the basis of them. The hypothesis which explains the most data in a given field, without contradicting the evidence of any of it or any established fact is regarded as the most probable.

So in the ethical field, principles are usually first conceived on the basis of observed facts in the lives of ethical subjects. To be accorded universal validity they must meet all conceivable tests under all possible conditions. To make to order such tests in the ethical field as the scientist can usually do in the laboratory is impossible, and we must depend, for the most part, upon hypothetical, imaginary situations. We have already seen the danger of basing conclusions on hypothetical cases, so we must, as a rule, consider our principles as, at the most, probable, but subject to change. This is more true of derivative principles, especially the ones pertaining to concrete applications, than of the primary principles, accepted because they seem to us self-evident. However, even these should not be regarded as absolutely valid and so unchangable. It is quite possible and frequently happens that what we regarded as self-evident at one time becomes doubtful or even untrue in our opinion on the basis of further knowledge. We are always apt, one might almost say bound, to make mistakes in moral and ethical judgments, as well as in those of a non-moral or non-ethical character, and we should be willing to admit our fallibility and prepared to rectify our mistakes. However, we should not be too hasty about throwing over judgments which are the result of sincere thought, even when subsequent events lead us to

think them invalid. Hold on to them as possible, at least until further investigation convinces you that you were wrong, then admit your mistake and accept your new principle as more probable.

It may appear from the foregoing that the writer's ideas of ethical principles are very flexible, perhaps too insecure to be of any value; that his notion of the moral life is one of a constant shifting, twisting and turning, constant doubt and questioning. To a certain extent this is true. A moral life is a constant growth and development, which involves change. Every moral act is the bringing of one or more principles before the bar of empirical criticism, every moral problem involves a doubt of the universal applicability of some one or more principles. If our problems are to be real ones, not mere questions of shadowy beliefs, our principles must be clearly thought out, exactly stated and ready to hand. Where this is the case our principles are not so apt to come into conflict, but when they do the conflict will be sharp and the problem will be definite. Otherwise we will, in all probability, miss real moral issues, sliding through or around them without realizing that there might be any question, simply because our principles are so indefinite and shadowy that they can be held together in the mind without suspicion of inconsistency, though they are really at varience. But to have clear and definite principles and insist that they cannot change would be like the acorn refusing to change its shell and meat for the bark and wood of the oak tree; it would mean

a static condition, which can never be the case in the moral life. If we are to develop into the mighty oak of a full moral personality, our ethical and moral ideas must be, not only clearly and definitely in mind, but they must also be subject to change where they are found inconsistent with each other or with the facts of life. Only so may we "grow in wisdom (moral as well as intellectual) and stature and in favor with God and man".

In a preceeding section (1) we saw one of the main reasons, if not the main one, why there are moral problems. The moral life has many sides, there are so many relationships to be considered in activity, all of which have their respective standards. It seems to be impossible, so far as we can determine, to subsume the various standards under any comprehensive and thoroughly consistent criterion. As a result we are constantly coming upon cases in which the principles of two or more of the relationships are in conflict, and we must determine which one is, in this instance, most liable to tend towards the highest value. It is unthinkable that God, the Perfectly Ethical and Moral Object of our worship, should have such problems to face. But we do know that Jesus Christ, during the Incarnation, had to deal with a conflict of principles and to decide which one should be accorded the preference. For example, we know that He withdrew from the crowds, refusing to heal the halt the maimed and the blind in order that He might spend time in communion with the Father or in instructing

(1) See Part I, page 21f.

His disciples. Here is a case of discarding the altruistic principle of relieving distress, in order to fulfill what He decided to be a higher one, the preparation of Himself and His followers for the social task of spreading the Kingdom of God. The difference seems to be that between an infinite being and finite ones. Whatever other limitations Our Lord assumed when He became Incarnate, He at least had the human limitations of time and space. He could be only one place at one time, and He could accomplish only so much in a given space of time. It seems that the primary reason for the conflict of principles is the human limitation under which we as physical beings have to labor. We shall discuss this further when we consider the ethics of Our Lord.

Another of the general considerations relates to the different kinds of principles. We have, first, the abstract principles, such as the Fatherhood of God, and the Universal Brotherhood of man. Then there are the middle principles, which we derive by relating abstract propositions to the facts of life, as the consideration that, if all men are our brothers, we should treat them as such by loving them. Finally there are the moral principles, the judgments as to the actual application of the more general middle principles to concrete cases. One might say, this man is my brother, therefore I should help him secure a position in order that he may have some way of earning his lodging and board. A purely abstract

system of ethics would be absolutely worthless. There is no less worthwhile study than that of such uneducative topics as the moral standard, the moral judgment, altruism, the social organism, etc. On the other hand, we have seen (1) that a strictly concrete ethics or code of morals is an impossibility. Acting morally without any knowledge and use of principles is as inconceivable as solving a problem in geometry without any knowledge and use of the axioms. One might strike the right answer by accident now and then, but it would be one chance in a thousand. It would not be any more moral in the one case than it would be academically satisfactory in the other. The general principles serve as bridges to connect the abstract principles of intuition or ratiocination with the moral judgments in particular instances. Without them we should be lost, and the development of them is one of the important functions of students of ethics.

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(1) See page 45ff.

(b) The ethics of Jesus.

Let us now consider briefly the fundamental principles of Our Lord's ethics, in order that we may see how they appeal to our moral consciousness and how they may be applied to the ethical and moral problems of the twentieth century. We have already said that His ethics were based upon His theology. God, as the loving Father of all men desired that they should, in all things, be loving children, worthy of the inheritance which He had prepared for them. His religion was based upon an analogy familiar to all, the family. The relationship between father and sons and between sons themselves in the ideal human family represented, in a deficient but very real way, the relationship between God and men, and what the relationships of men to God and towards each other should be.

Now the key word in the ideal family relations is "love", and so it was in Our Lord's ethics. The summary of all true law is universal love, yet love is something which cannot be the result of a command by anyone, no matter what authority is accorded him, and so cannot be the subject of law. Our Lord's formulation of the Summary as commandments and the designation of the commandments as Law was undoubtedly due to His appreciation of one of the laws of pedagogy, that all acquisition of knowledge depends upon a relation of the new facts to something already experienced. The only type of ethics with which the Jews were familiar was a

legalistic one, so He put His teaching into a more or less legalistic form in order that it might "get across".

In other words, love is essentially free. It cannot be the result of any constraint or restraint. These can produce only fear, or, at the most, respect. Love is spontaneous, springing up in one person in response to that which he perceives to be lovable in another. It is not, hwever, simply the result of chance. It can be cultivated, and one of the chief functions of love is to engender it in other people. To make one's self lovable in the sight of all men is one of the primary principles of the ethics of Jesus, and is merely a statement in other words of the Golden Rule.

Another characteristic of love as Jesus conceived it distinguishes it from the common use of the term. To Him it was a positive motive of action, rather than a passive, sentimental feeling of attraction, or a passion in the sense of lust. The latter is essentially acquisitive, a feeling of desire for the company of another, in its milder forms, or for complete mastery over another in more severe cases. Real love, however, is distributive, a voluntary sharing of one's all, even his personality, with others. Its force is, to use physical terms, centrifugal rather than centripital, and yet, it engenders in its outward expression a bond which binds subject and object together in a closer union than any physical bond.

It defies the laws of physics as it defied the Law of the Jews, and as it often seems, at least, to defy the rules of common sense. Love is the abrogation of all law for it is perfect freedom.

Jesus' conception of sin may help us to understand more fully the outward, active character of love and the obligation which its acceptance as a standard of ethics places upon the subject. Spencer has expressed this conception very well in the following extract:

"In one passage (Mark, vii.20-3) Our Lord gives a catalogue of vices and crimes, but this does not represent His central thought about sin. For to Jesus it is not vices and crimes, but not doing good that is the great and fundamental sin. Indolence, indifference to the needs of others, neglect of opportunities of service, faithlessness, uselessness -- these are the sins, or rather, sinful states of omission which invite God's rebuke and chastisement and exclusion from His Kingdom and consignment to the fire that consumes the rubish of the soul-world. And out of absence of goodness arise the various sorts of active evil, such as malice, lust, hypocrisy, blasphemy. These latter are but the manifestation and efflorescence of the real and essential sinfulness, which consists in barrenness and isolation in the universe of fruitfulness and fellowship." (1)

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(1) "The Ethics of the Gospel", p.132.

Before we go further there is another element in Our Lord's teaching which must be born in mind. In distinction from all purely secular ethics, His is eschatological in character. Not only does He consider, and insist that all others should consider, actions here and now, but also the influence which these actions will have upon one's life in the future state. His belief in immortality was essentially a religious concept, based upon His belief in God, but we have seen that it is also a necessary concept from the metaphysical point of view if ethics is to have any meaning aside from a simple instinct for the preservation of the race.(1) But we must not confuse the idea of immortality of the soul through absorption in the Ultimate Spiritual Reality, and the Christian faith in the continued existence after death of a true individual personality with a real, even though spiritual, body. We do not know what a "spiritual" body may be, but we may assume that it will be such an one as will fit us for real personal existence, permitting both impression and expression, in the life of Eternity.

Concerning this future state we have no real knowledge. Our Lord's representation of it is in the terms of current Jewish eschatology, a great deal of which is meaningless for us today. Here again He may have been expressing Himself in terms which could be understood by His hearers, though knowing that they were quite inadequate. It is more likely, however, that He was ex-

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(1) See page 11 f.

pressing all that He Himself knew on the subject. He admitted ignorance of the time of the final judgment, but He certainly seemed to think that it would be in the near future. That He could have known that it would not occur for over nineteen hundred years, and could have foreseen the changes in human life which were to take place in that period, is unthinkable if we are to retain the belief that His mind was really human. That He was also ignorant of the details of the Kingdom of Heaven in its fulfilled state seems highly probable, and He very likely believed the Jewish eschatology to be essentially correct.

However, His insight into the true nature of God and the supreme value of love led Him to a development of the Jewish concept which gives us a very real insight into the essential characteristics of the Kingdom. This development is the idea that where true faith in God and His Incarnate Son, finding its expression in love for God and man, is found in this world, there also one finds the Kingdom of God, proleptically present, limited it is true by the finiteness of the created world, but present in a very real sense, in that those who are actually in it exhibit in so far as their limitations will permit the activity of members.

We are now in a position to consider the closest approach our Lord makes to an objective ethical criterion. In the course of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt.v.48) we find this cryptic saying: "Ye, therefore, shall be

perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect". Or, as it is translated in the King James Version: "Be ye, therefore, perfect, as your Father in Heaven is perfect". Either is a legitimate rendering of the Greek, but the imperative form seems more in the spirit of the context, although it must be admitted that we cannot be sure it is given in the same context in the Gospel as in the actual teaching of Our Lord. That, however, makes comparatively little difference. Whether it was a command to equal God in perfection, or a declaration that, in the future, they would equal ~~equal~~ Him, provided they observed the admonitions He gave, we have the difficulty of finite beings becoming or being perfect. That the reference is to moral rather than metaphysical perfection does not lessen the difficulty. Our Lord's conception of moral perfection involved metaphysical perfection also, since it required the will and power to do all good, We have already seen that His human limitations prevented Him from meeting all the opportunities for good which came within His notice. Only an all-knowing and all-powerful being could do so. How then could He command or predict that finite human beings should achieve moral perfection? The answer lies in a further characteristic of Our Lord's teaching which serves to distinguish it most clearly from the ethics of Judaism, or from any form of ethics which places the emphasis upon works

or results. To Our Lord the vital thing in all moral action was the motive, the subjective realization of the values to be achieved and the desire to achieve the highest which the situation permits. In other words, it is the conscious direction of the ethical agent towards the highest values he can conceive which constitutes his moral perfection. This, for Our Lord, and for all Christians, is the connecting point between ethics and religion. "The point of the whole matter is that the finite being cannot attain perfection in itself, for finiteness excludes perfection. Of this, surely, fact and observation allow no doubt whatever. The only way is to abandon the pretention to perfection as a finite individual, and to claim it in virtue of absorption of heart and will in a greater being (we should say the Greatest Being, i.e., God). The antagonism to evil and the progressive conquest will remain as in morality; but they will be only one consequence of a change in principle which takes the universe in a (1) new light and character, opposed to prima facie sight."

It is often said that the teaching of Jesus is world-renouncing; that there must ever be a very real antagonism between the true follower of Christianity and the "world". This, however, is only a half-truth. His teaching was undoubtedly world-renouncing, if one means by the term the placing of universal human interests above the self, and the spiritual values above the carnal. But

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(1) Bosanquet, "Some Suggestions in Ethics", p.102

in so far as there are many good things in life which one should enjoy, and should promote for the enjoyment of others, His teaching is world-affirming. Just as He "came not to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfill them", so He came not to destroy the world but to fulfill it; to show mankind how to bring out in the world the real values which it holds, to make them available to all, and by devoting all their energy to them, to conquor evil. Richard Meux Benson has caught the spirit of Christ's view of the world in the following quotation from his "Spiritual Readings for Advent": "God did not create the world by a mistake. People are often ready to think that after all it was a mistake, a misfortune; so that if God had really known all from the beginning He would not have incurred the misery which belongs to creation, He would not have allowed such circumstances to arise as would make the Passion necessary. We must reject all such dreams as blasphemous. God does not merely get out of evil by a wonderful device, leaving the evil as a thing that had better not have been. God comes to triumph over evil and therefore we must regard it not merely as antagonistic to God, but as subservient to Him". (1)

Let us conclude this very summary survey of the fundamentals of Our Lord's ethics by two further quotations. The former, a concise statement of the features which dis-

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(1) "Quoted by Webb. "A Century of Anglican Theology",p.95

tinghished his teaching from the Jewish ideas, is from Dean Rashdall (2):

"Three great changes were introduced by Our Lord into the current moral ideas of His time. They are briefly these: (a) the separation of the genuinely ethical and permanently valuable elements in the teaching of the Jewish Law from the ceremonial and transitory elements. (b) The correction of the current legalism by a more inward morality which condemned the uncharitable or unclean thought or intention as well as the completed act. (c) The definite proclamation of the principle that the neighbor to whom the Jew owed duties was not merely his fellow-countryman, but his fellow-man."

And the second is from J. Denney's article on "Anger", in the "Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels" with Mr. Scott's comment upon it:

"'The two things in human conduct which moved Jesus most quickly and most deeply to anger were (1) inhumanity, wrong done to the needs and rights of men; and (2) misrepresentation of God by professedly religious people and especially by religious teachers.' When His anger kindles it is always in defence of others; it is absolutely pure of personal feeling, and it does not destroy even temporarily His love for those on whom it falls. Though anger is often sinful, the absence of anger may be due to the absence of love; and the man who can see the 'little ones' made to stumble and who takes it quite

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(1)"Conscience and Christ", p.94

cooly is very far from the Kingdom of God." (1)

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(1) Scott, "New Testament Ethics", p.56 f.

(c) Jesus' ethics in the Twentieth Century.

If the ethic of Jesus was grounded in the true Ultimate Reality of the Universe, and if His deductions from His metaphysical concepts (it matters not that He seems to have arrived at them by means of religious insight rather than philosophic reasoning) were valid, then His ethical principles are just as true today as they were when He first taught them almost two thousand years ago. It follows that, if such is the case, they should appeal to the moral consciousness of the present day just as they did to the moral consciousness of a portion of His hearers, and as they have appealed to an increasingly large proportion of the world's population in the succeeding ages. Further, if they were and are true they should be just as applicable to the problems of today as they ever were to any problems. Not that the application will be as easy, for it could not be. The problems of the Twentieth Century are more complicated than any problems man has been called upon to face in any preceeding age. However, this is the same world, its fundamental principles of operation and development are the same, its Ultimate Reality is just as He ever was and ever will be, before time began, and after the time series has run its course; never subject to time, since He is in truth infinite

and so eternal, i.e. non-temporal.

Although we may believe firmly that this is the case and be perfectly willing to shape our own lives in accordance with it, we must recognize that many men do not seem to feel that way about it. In theory perhaps most people would accept many of the ethical principles of Our Lord (provided one did not insist upon the metaphysical or religious implications which are involved in them), but in practice they are very far from observing them. There are, I think, real reasons for this inconsistency between theory and practice, but before we consider them it would be well to have in mind the limits within which we can expect the ethical and moral teaching of Jesus and the Church, in so far as it truly represents Him, to operate.

First, we cannot consistently expect those who do not accept the religious teaching of Jesus and the Church to feel any real obligation to follow their ethical and moral behests. We have seen earlier (1) that the primary ethical principles of any system are based upon metaphysical concepts of the fundamental nature of the universe, and that they can carry no conviction unless one really believes those concepts to be true. Also we have seen (2) that the primary religio-metaphysical concepts of Our Lord are undemonstrable, and rest, in the last analysis, upon an act of faith. It follows that

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(1) See page 8ff.

(2) See page 42f.

those and those alone who accept Jesus as Lord, and find in the Father Whom He revealed a Father, Whose will it is their ambition to discover and obey, can be expected to accept and practice the ethical principles which He taught.

The second limitation has to do with the area or amount of human life and conduct we may expect the teaching to cover. Aside from the major principles the application of which is left to us, the concrete details of moral teaching are referred to circumstances familiar to the first century and to the portion of the world in which they were given. Some of these are, of course, part of the perennial experience of every man, and of society, at all times, but the opportunities, with their involved obligations, have been indefinitely increased in the intervening centuries, and concerning many of the situations we are called upon to face today we search the teaching of Our Lord and His immediate followers for advice in vain.

To say that this is a universe of values and that man is able to recognize values, is merely another way of saying that there is an ultimate end or purpose toward which the universe is not only tending but striving, and that man is a purposive creature, working for ends which he holds more or less constantly before him. The final cause or end which determines the activity of the universe is the highest value. The

value, or end, which determines the activity of a man is that which he holds, at the moment, to be the most desirable, though not always the highest. Only in so far as his activity is determined by what he considers to be the highest value can he be called moral. If we are true to this principle in our contemplation of others that which appears to be the end towards which another's action tends will determine our judgment of the act; and the summation of all the activities we observe will determine our judgment of his character. In the same way, the ultimate end or "summum bonum" of an ethical system will determine our judgment of the system. Need we say that this is the only legitimate basis upon which to make moral or ethical judgments if the conclusions we have already reached are valid.

The ultimate aim of the universe, in the Christian view, is the glorification of God. This is a term which one may define almost at will, but the acceptance or rejection of the definition is largely a matter of personal taste, or ethical opinion. From the teaching of Our Lord we gather that His idea of it was the development, through the activity of the whole universe, both Creator and created, of a supernatural, eschatological, spiritual "family". Each member of the family would have a function in the "glorifying" of the Head, and each would fulfill that function perfectly. However, the activity of each would be free, in that it would be a voluntary,

self-determination of subordination to the divine will. Further, and what is most important for us, this "glorification" need not wait for the "end of time", but may begin here in this life, and actually did begin at the Incarnation and developed with the spread of membership in the Kingdom to those who believed upon His name.

An integrated personality is one whose every act is determined by an "end in view". Of course, every purposive act, which means a fairly large proportion of all human acts, has some end in view. If, however, one acts merely on the whim of the moment, each individual act having little or no conscious relation to what he considers his ultimate aim in life, then he is not an integrated personality; his life is not an organic whole, but rather, an unorganized patchwork, like the old fashioned "crazy quilts". It is the man who has thought out his aim or highest end in life and who, consciously (or by consciously developed habits) has organized his life about that end, that we consider an integrated or unified personality.

Perhaps the most familiar sort of integrated personality today is the man or woman who has selected as his or her highest ideal the possession of a large fortune or the enjoyment of a prominent place in the social set. Probably every one knows at least one such person, whose every act is calculated beforehand

and actually performed because it will contribute something to the attainment of the end. It was concerning one of this sort of people that the following little dialogue was written:

"He cares for the big things-- ambition, popularity, a prominent position, luxury. He will enjoy being a personage and having wealth at his command. For my part, I care infinitely more for the small things of life -- love, friendship, sympathy."

"The small things! Good Lord!" said the bishop, and his jaw dropped. He also dropped the subject. (1)

Probably most of us, down deep in our hearts, would agree with the sentiment expressed by the Bishop's exclamations. We should consider a life organized upon the basis of what are here termed the "big things" as a rather low conception of the highest aim of a human life. However, the fact remains, that many people do think that way, and many more act as though they did, though they would probably disclaim it if taxed. It is one of the problems which we have to face, and it is not an easy one. On what grounds is one to convince the successful business man, who has amassed a huge fortune and given his family all that wealth can buy, that he has not "chosen the better part", and that he might have been far better off himself, and provided a better chance in life for his children, if he had devoted his activity to the pursuit of a higher end, even the highest end as conceived by Christianity? He

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(1) From "Prisoners" by Miss Cholmondeley, p.113, quoted by Bosanquet, "Some Suggestions in Ethics", p.83.

would probably tell us he had no time to listen to such fantastic dreams -- that he was entirely satisfied with his life, and cared not a whit what we thought about it.

Here we may take consolation from the fact that the development of a higher ethical standard, the inculcation of a higher set of values as the final aim of man, has ever met with opposition. The chief opposition of Our Lord and His followers in their inauguration of the new Way of life was from those in power, the wealthy and politically prominent. This is ever the case, for these are naturally most opposed to any radical change in conditions, for fear that it will mean a loss of wealth or position for them. However, we must not let opposition deter us. Great things are never accomplished except at the cost of sacrifice and suffering, and if Christ was willing to suffer for us we should be willing to suffer for ourselves and others. It is Bosanquet again who phrases the situation so aptly: "The love of man, and of God if you come to that, is a passion for achieving the highest values and the best life for all-- in a word, salvation. The idea of attempting this without being ready to face pain and sacrifice is almost blasphemous. Do we really think we are to enter into life just as we happen to grow, without experience of conflict and discipline? It

would be a way out in some degree if the conflict and discipline in which we take a part could always end with our own particular suffering and not involve others. But men have known since reflection began that this is an absurdity. The unity of man forbids it. You cannot attack an evil or achieve a good without inconveniencing someone, and the natural man resents being inconvenienced, and never more so than if, rightly or wrongly, the interference aims at his salvation. Of course you want to hurt anyone as little as possible. But you cannot make it a principle that no one is to be hurt at all." (1)

Values are not simple facts, but rather qualities of systems or organizations of facts. Though we speak of "the good", and of the "highest good" or "summum bonum", what we really mean is a state of existence in which certain facts, including as the most important ones, personalities, are organized in a certain manner, so as to produce certain qualities which we recognize as the highest values man can achieve. In the same way, the "end in view" of a purposive action is never a simple fact, but a state of affairs which will be the result of the action. Happiness is not a fact but a condition. A moral character is not a mere fact,but a condition of mind, body and soul which results in moral action at all time.

It would seem that it is only in the complete personality that value and goodness can be real. They may be recognized under other conditions, but if the

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(1) "Some Suggestions in Ethics", p.123

universe is an organic whole, with a definite purpose, then all real values are definite parts of the whole and no single one can be recognized completely without being correlated with the other values in the universe. It is an error to give any one value the preference as the exclusive end, for all minister to it, and it is only in the whole of existence that it can find its full expression.

There is an old saying to the effect that all evil is the result of using what we should enjoy (intelligence, love, beauty, religion) and enjoying what we should use (wealth and material comfort); In other words, from the reversing of the true relation between means and ends. The proper organization of one's life represents a subordination of means, which may be values in themselves, but not ultimate ones, to the higher values, which are, themselves, the component parts of the organic whole of the highest end or the purpose of the universe. A human life, so organized, forms a harmonious element as well as an active factor in the totality of the universal organism. And it must not be forgotten that each human being, as such a factor (whether potentially or actually) is a value itself, to be realized in a personality integrated about the highest end of the universe.

This rather lengthy digression, in which we have attempted to state the ethical position in terms of a combined philosophy of values and philosophy of organism,

will serve as the pattern upon which we shall attempt the theoretical statement of the Christian ethical position. In it we shall use as a basis the teaching of Our Lord, recognizing the limitations we have already cited, and using such developments as the exigencies of the time seem to demand and as our moral consciousness approves.

The hierarchy of values in the Christian system will, naturally, have at its summit the ultimate aim of the universe as we Christians believe it to have been revealed to us; that is, the perfect social unity of the Divine Family in which all men are included. Subordinate to this we would place as correlative principles the values inherent in the ethical standards which we examined earlier (1).In Order that the standards may be in mind, let us list them again, using only the second section as being more appropriate to our purpose: There are social ethics, altruistic ethics, the ethics of self-realization or personal ethics, and the ethics of mysticism.

Now what are the values represented by these various standards? Obviously, the value of a social organization lies in the fact that it represents (on an imperfect scale in this life) the social union which we shall enjoy as the gift of God in the Life of Eternity. It must be maintained that the fullness of this future life is a gift of God, and is not to be realized by a process of evolution. However, it is also true that God, although omnipotent, cannot realize the supreme end of Creation without the co-operation of men, since such co-operation is a part and an important part of the realiza-

See pages 21-24.

tion, and it is not within the nature of power to produce a voluntary co-operation in a free-will agent. Now obviously the aim of society in this world should be the nearest approach possible to the ideal social state of the Kingdom of God. It is valuable in so far as it does realize this state, but it can never be more than a means, though a vital one, to this end. That the present organization of society is very far from the ideal is something which any clear-minded person must admit, but that we are closer today than every before is, I think, a reasonable and encouraging belief. The Church, and individual Christians have a task before them which is worthy of the mettle of any and every real man, and I firmly believe that it is in the Church as a social organism that we find the nearest approach to the ideal society this world has to offer, and this in spite of the many and flagrant mistakes the Church has made, the "unhappy divisions" in the Body of Christ, and the abuses in the form of political intrigues within and without, hypocrisy and incompetence in officials, and other failures too numerous to mention.

Altruistic ethics represents a bridge between social and personal ethics. It is what is meant by the usual interpretation of the Golden Rule. The values of which it is the principle are both social and personal, in that it is a recognition of the great importance of the individual human being in the universal scheme. On the basis of the Christian system it is the duty of each member of the body of Christ to aid

in the development of every other member, potential or actual, with whom he comes in contact. The unity of mankind makes this an element in social ethics also, as the infinite ramifications of social intercourse make it absolutely impossible to know the effect a good deed, or an evil one, may have upon society as a whole. However, the motive in altruism is far more personal or individual than social, and we may be sure, on the basis of our faith in the divine ordering of the universe, that that which is in reality a good deed done for one man or for a single social unit, such as a family, will not have injurious effects upon society as a whole. This is simply another illustration of the close relationship of the values in their organic membership in the whole.

Personal ethics, or the ethic of self realization is of vital importance in the Christian system for the same reasons that we mentioned for altruism. Here, however, one is concerned with the ethical agent as himself the object of his activity. The second command in the Summary of the Law involves some sort of self-love which is of equal importance with the love of one's neighbor. The fact that it is assumed in the form of the command that everyone does actually love him- or her-self does not mean that it is wrong to do so, but that it is a necessity in the love of others, and that it provides a means of measuring the love for others. The reason is fairly obvious. The ethical agent is himself a human being and as such a

value to be cherished. Each one is a potential member of the Kingdom of God and it is a part of his duty as a Christian to make himself the best member he can be. In fact, it is difficult to see how the ideal social organism is possible except through the organization of ideal individual members, each of whom is both capable of and willing to perform his true function in the activity of the whole. It would seem, then, that individual development or self-realization should assume a primary place in any ethical system. However, we must not be too hasty in making such an assumption. The human being, it has been said, is a social animal. He cannot realize himself except through social intercourse, so that the social and altruistic standards have a very definite part to play in the personal standard. Once again, our values are involved in an organic whole from which no single one can be removed and set up as ultimate without losing something itself, and detracting something from the others.

Mystical ethics is not overly popular today, and is usually slurred over as of little moment. We cannot allow it a great deal of space, but we must accord it its place in the organism and insist upon its importance to a full conception. If we are right in assuming the Christian metaphysical position, i.e., theism plus the doctrine of the Incarnation, then the relationship between man and God, even in this life in the flesh, is of vital importance. This relationship is a mystical one, in some degree, in practically all cases, though the degrees vary a great deal. However, this does not mean

that it is any the less real, and for many people it is more real than any other experience. The act of faith which all men must make somewhere, if they think at all, is essentially mystical. That we do actually achieve contact with God through this channel is witnessed by too abundant testimony to be seriously questioned, and without entering into the psychology of it we may reasonably accept the testimony as, in a measure at least, trust-worthy, although it, of course, must come before the bar of reason as well as the bar of conscience, and prove itself worthy of being placed on a par with the knowledge we achieve through other methods.

Kant makes a rather serious objection to mysticism, which he carries out to its logical conclusion in a condemnation of any ethic based upon the concept of a personal God. His objection is that it involves the possibility of "going behind the back" of the moral law to gain exemption from a part or all of it through personal influence, or as is more often the case, through religious observance. The objection cuts deep into the life of the Church and of its individual members. One fears that there is far too much of this feeling among people who call themselves Christians; the idea that God is far more ready to forgive than we to ask forgiveness, and that all one has to do is ask, or perform some mechanical religious observance. Such a conception is foreign to any idea of an ethical system, and fortunately the Church is not committed to it, nor do we have to regard it as Christian, for it

certainly is not. It is one of the dangers of the Christian system, with its doctrine of the forgiveness of sins, which we must be on our guard against, both in ourselves and in others. Forgiveness, whether of God towards man or of one man towards another, involves more than the mere asking and according. It requires a true repentance, which includes a willingness to make amends, a desire that the act shall not break off the previous relationship, and the determination that it shall not occur again. Such a reaction to sin represents an ethical and moral development in the subject, and is in perfect accord with the Christian religio-metaphysical doctrines.

Thus, the values to be attained through mystical activity have a definite part to play in the whole system, but they must assume their proper place in the organism without over-ruling or counteracting the other values. As all religion is more or less mystical, this element is of especial importance in a Christian system, though it might be disregarded in a secular one.

These four standards cover the primary principles to be observed in Christian ethics. They are not all explicitely stated in the teaching of Our Lord, but they are implied. His command to perfection involves all of them, in the proper relationship to each other, and to over-stress any one or to omit any one is bound to overthrow the harmony of the whole. Perfect harmony is not to be expected in this finite existence, and we must expect to find apparent conflict between even these fundamental

standards. We believe that they can be harmonized, and actually are in the Kingdom in so far as it already exists, but our very finiteness, and the conditions which we must face in the world today make discord inevitable. It must be accepted in the faith that it is ultimately to be overcome, and with every effort on our part to over-come it here and now. "Evil is evil; you have not to palter with this truth; but all the same it can be overcome; not at a distance, but now and here; and the secret of overcoming it is to feel that it is overcome, and to treat it practically as a conquered thing. Such is the faith of science in its battle with appearances; it does not suppose some to be intelligible and some not. If it did it could not work. And such must be in effect the faith of the good man, if he is in any place or time to overcome the world. He must not suppose that here and there he may light upon an absolute evil which is in principle a separate thing, unresolvable and insuperable. His faith is essentially universal and practical. If it were not universal it could not be practical. He could not tell at what points he must let evil triumph. The critic rejects this faith as too easy; but we must be forgiven for suspecting that he really finds it too hard. And in a degree, in the progress of the world, you can see your faith justified, and gain sidelights on the nature of evil which reveal to you precisely how, under what conditions, it must be evil, but how also in principle it must con-

tinually lend itself to be overcome by good; continually, but, in the finite world, never completely." (1)

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(1) Bosanquet, "Some Suggestions in Ethics", p. 104.

Part V

The Moral Life

In the preceeding section we have discussed at some length the theoretical or abstract principles of Christian ethics. However, as we observed at the beginning of the section, a purely abstract ethics is worthless. All the theorizing in the world cannot produce results without application to concrete problems. But the application of the primary principles to problems of conduct we have seen to be the perogative of the individual subject involved. The individual conscience is the final authority. On the other hand, it is possible and desirable that the lines of such application should be made more or less clear by those who have considered the subject with a little more care than the average person has the time or inclination to devote to it. It is in this formulation of the middle principles or general applications that the Church and Christian students of ethics may perform the greatest service for the ordinary man, and the opportunity to do so involves the obligation to devote one's best efforts to the task.

Of course, as the middle principles, derived from the primary ones, become more detailed more opportunity for conflict is offered. This is a fact which one cannot avoid. The attempt must be made to hold the values in as harmonious balance as possible, but the fear of conflict or apparent inconsistency should not prevent one from attempting the deduction

of the derivative principles, making, of course, every effort for harmony which does not involve an undue subordination of any one of the primary principles. The details of practical application to individual problems must be left to the persons involved. We can condone no complete moral code which attempts to outline every act of a man's life. So, also, the conflicts which are a necessary condition of finite existence, must, for the most part, be left to the individual to be resolved according to his best lights, on the basis of his previous experience and his concept of the highest good.

Sin is essentially the failure to promote what one knows or believes to be the highest values. It may be simply the disregarding of an opportunity to promote it, or the choice of a lesser value, or the definite will to oppose the highest value. In any case the results are evil, for, although we have full faith in the ultimate realization of the "summum bonum" or purpose of the universe, any delay of it is wrong and results in consequences which are opposed to the good, and so must be evil.

Sins may be conveniently classified under two general heads as wrongs done to others and wrongs to one's own personality. It is often said that all sins are anti-social actions, and in a sense this is true, since the second class has social consequences through one's contacts with other people. On the other hand, it might just as well be said that all sin is sin against one's own per-

sonality, for the deliberate choice of an evil end, the deliberate performance of a wrong, has its effect upon the personality, although some other individual or social group may be the direct victim. It has both the subjective effect of dulling the moral insight of the agent through the habit forming process, and the objective effect, in the language of Christianity, of rendering the agent unfit for fellowship with God. However, it is more true to the "ethos" of Christianity to say that the latter effect is caused by the former state of the agent. It is moral insensibility, or the habitual disregard for moral distinctions, which renders one unfit for the divine fellowship of the Kingdom, just as one is deaf to the voice of God when it comes through the dictates of the Conscience in this life. It is a disease which defies all attempts at cure. It cannot even be reached by divine forgiveness, for, although God does not refuse it or even fail to offer it, the agent has become impervious to forgiveness through his disease. Unless he is brought to his senses through a stirring spiritual experience, such as an apparently miraculous rescue from a grave danger, his case is practically hopeless. We cannot know what may be prepared for such a person in the life after death, but we do know that as he is in this life he cannot inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.

Now there is a great deal of emphasis placed upon the negative character of sin, its failure to choose the good, its failure to accept and make the most of opportunities to achieve the higher values. This emphasis

is right, but it must not be carried too far. It must be recognized that there can no more be a pure opposition to the good without the recognition of some positive value behind it than there can logically be a denial which has no positive reason behind it. At the root of every human vice there is a positive need or desire which, if it could have been incorporated with the main system of values would have added a value to them. It is because our narrowness prevents the proper subordination of this need to the primary values that we are aware of the opposition, and the filling of the need is to us a vice or sin which we try to suppress. And it is a sin to fail to suppress it so long as it has not been incorporated in the general system which one recognizes as the organization of the highest good.

"There is a widespread conviction, due, I think, in a great measure to an exaggerated doctrine of free will, conscience, and responsibility, in connection with orthodox Christianity, that the knowledge of life embodied in everyday morality is a negligible quantity, and that everyone has thus much by instinct, and that no strictly intellectual defect but only one of the will is implied in preoccupation with vicious or trivial interests, whether in art and literature, or in actual living. We know the lines:

'Whom do you count the worst man upon earth?
'Be sure, he knows, in his conscience, more
'Of what right is, than arrives at birth
'In the best man's acts that we bow before.'

I do not believe a word of it. I believe that the intelligence of 'the worst man upon earth' is confused throughout and shattered by pervading discrepancies and conflicts with itself, and is wholly incapable of conceiving or of protraying an orderly life in wholesome relations with man and nature". (1)

There is a decidedly Platonic element in this correlation of virtue and intelligence (or knowledge, which for Plato meant more than we mean by the term, and was really much closer to our word "intelligence"). Though Platonism is not very popular today, here is one phase in which he seems to have been very close to the truth. The development of modern psychology, especially in the realm of psycho-therapy, and its employment in the treatment of criminal cases is a definite recognition of the intellectual and psychic basis of many, if not most, evil tendencies in man. It is to be hoped that the Church will not be slow to appreciate this aspect of the moral situation and that it will use it to the best advantage in its many opportunities to exercise moral influence.

What is the function of the Church, particularly of its official ministers, in the moral life? If we are right in the conclusions we have reached so far, it is obviously not in the direction of regimentation on the basis of some iron-bound code which must be observed by all. If Christianity has not been on the wrong track these twenty centuries, it has something of vital importance to offer

mankind. Jesus Christ, the example it holds up before us, is the one Man whose personality was perfectly integrated about the true metaphysical and ethical principles of the universe. By this perfect integration He was in closer harmony with the ultimate scheme of things than any other man; in other words, He had a far clearer insight into the will of God which is the basis of the universal ethics. In His life here on earth, and through the continuation of the Incarnation in His embodiment in the Church, He has passed along to us that which we could not perceive for ourselves. He has revealed to us what is well pleasing in the eyes of God. In so far as our moral consciousness approves this revelation we believe ourselves to have a true moral insight and to be in a position to fulfill our proper function in the universal scheme.

We have seen that Our Lord left us only a few major principles, the applications of which are left to us. He did not formulate any comprehensive code. If the Church is to be true to His principle it too will attempt to impose no rigid application to particular problems. It will leave the final judgment to the individual conscience, where it must rest in any practical system. It will avoid, so far as is consistent with the preservation of its own integrity, judgments and condemnations of acts already performed, and lay the emphasis upon the development of moral insight which will render improbable, if not impossible, the recurrence of the wrong. Its function is production of the good rather than destruction of the evil. The latter will come about automatically when the former is effected.

More specifically, the duties of the Church and of individual Christians may be definitely related to the primary principles we have formulated as the primary values, contributory to the "summum bonum". In the usual course of events any effort to outline a program of Church work places the chief emphasis, if not the complete attention upon social work. However, it is almost always a limited social plan, directed towards the relief of some particular distress of some particular class. The reasons for this emphasis are two-fold. First, it is obvious to all but the most superficial observers that there are conditions among certain classes which are anything but in accord with Christian principles. In the second place, it is so easy to outline plans for such relief and let it go at that. To show the plan as the program of the Church is sufficient to convince most people that the Church is alive to the situation. The individual can rest easy, for both the conditions and the plans for relief are so remote from his usual course of daily life that, having expressed his dissatisfaction with the former and his approval of the latter, he may consider he has done his part. This is no attempt to minimise the wonderful work the various Churches have done for the improvement of social conditions. They have done marvels, considering the conditions with which they had to deal and the opposition against which they had to work. It is merely an attempt to point out what seems to be the attitude of a great many so-called Christian men and women towards such work, as one reason why the Churches have not done even more.

Let us insist here and now that, fine as the social work among the lower classes has been in the past and important as it is that it should continue, never-the-less, the only social group which can be considered as an end in itself, a value worth the striving of all men, is the, at present, ideal universal brotherhood of all men. Individual nations are merely means to this end, and individual nations which are regarded by their citizens or rulers as ends in themselves, to be promoted at all costs, are a hindrance rather than a means. War is not only the greatest calamity which can come upon a nation or a people, but from the point of view of Christian ethics, it is the greatest sin and a fundamental absurdity. The nations are merely accidents of history. They are for the people, not the people for the state. A state is good in so far, and only in so far, as it promotes the true welfare of its citizens without detracting from the welfare of other peoples, In so far as a state is not good it is the duty of everyone who accepts the Christian ethical principles as valid to make it good. This cannot be done by warfare. "The religious wars ceased when men began to know their own ignorance-- that is, when they knew that all the dogmas of the Church are tenets of faith which cannot be demonstrated.... so that it is as ridiculous as it is unethical to force one's own faith upon another. Similarly political wars will cease when it is understood that no people is better than another by nature, so that this, an 'ideal', reason for waging war vanishes; and when, further, it is realized

that it is possible to reach an understanding in all, even economic, matters,and that an excuse can be found for killing, only in the rarest circumstances, which nowadays are never realized in practice." (1)

In this wholesale condemnation of war we have a reference to the major cause of all the wars of modern times, namely, economic interests. One need only mention the interference of the United States in the affairs of the Central American countries, which almost certainly would not have occurred except to protect our vested interests there; the basically economic reasons for the Great War in the need of the Central European countries for expansion both in their population and in their trade; the tariff disputes and the activity of the Russian Soviet in the world's markets today, which bid fair to embroil the world in another great war if they are not settled by conference and arbitration.

The social order today is essentially economic in nature, having as its fundamental elements industrialism and commercialism. These certainly have a real value as agents in bringing the peoples of the world closer together and adding to the comforts and opportunities of most men, but they are not primary values, worth promoting for their own sakes. Here again, it is only as they contribute to the true welfare of all men that they are good. Obviously, under present conditions, they do not do so. The majority

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(1) Driesch, "Ethical Principles", p.203

of men are practically "wage-slaves", devoting their lives and talents to the accumulation of wealth for a few. Even where the wage earner has been given a shorter working day with more leisure than he ever enjoyed before, he is not in a position to profit by it. Practically his whole life has been devoted to learning his particular job, and he has never learned to use his leisure time in pursuits which will serve to develop his personality and make him a really useful citizen of the world or fit him for citizenship in the Kingdom of God. The solution of this problem is for experts in the fields of economics and education. We do not advocate any of the solutions which have been suggested, but we do insist that present conditions are not what they should be and that it is the duty of Christian people to do everything in their power to better them. It is for the Church to criticize present institutions and outline the principles upon which the reformation of them should be based. The working out of the practical details is the function of those who are fitted for the task.

The educational system itself presents a very difficult but vitally important problem of ethics today. The purpose which seems to dominate the public system of this country, and probably of most countries, is the turning out of a standardized product, as rapidly and efficiently as possible, which shall be the sort of citizen the particular country desires. In almost every case this means a citizen who will be perfectly loyal to

his country "right or wrong", and will fill the little niche in the industrial scheme to which his inheritance and abilities have called him. One must admit that the real leaders in the educational field have seen the error in this system and are striving to bring about a change. Here again they are running upon the snag of vested interests, and their task is a difficult one. Nor can their solution of the problem be entirely satisfactory to the Church so long as their aim continues to be merely the development of the individual personality to its full capacity, without regard for the very necessary religious element. A full development of personality cannot be brought about on the basis of a Naturalistic or Humanistic philosophy or ethics. Here the Church must again assert its perogative in the educational field, a field which it dominated entirely not so many decades ago, and insist upon the mystical and religious elements which are necessary factors in any complete personality. Whether this is to be worked into the general educational program, or to be left entirely to the Churches as a supplementary phase of education is again a matter to be worked out by the experts. In the present state of sectarianism it rather looks as though it would have to be the latter, but individual sects have found the Parochial School system a satisfactory solution. Here again we merely insist that improvement is imperative, and leave the details to others.

So much for the social problems. It is a very hasty sketch, we admit, merely touching the high spots,but

it is sufficient to indicate the method of general application which we believe to be a necessary part of any ethical system which is to be effective.

Altruistic ethics will naturally merge somewhat into the social field, but its field is legitimately distinguishable from it. It will include not only our duty to individual human beings with whom we come into contact, but also our duty to the limited classes which we mentioned as forming the chief interest of most Church programs for social reform. The distinction from social ethics may seem artificial, but it is based upon the particularity of the object, in this class as distinct from its universality in the other. And here also we are primarily concerned with the activity of a single agent, whereas the former class is more concerned with the activity of social groups.

In the economic field it is the manifest duty of employers to avoid any exploitation of an employee, either in his time, his talents or his health, but to do everything possible to encourage him in the full use of all opportunities for the development of his personality and for self-realization. As a corollary, the employee must not cheat his employer of the work he has promised him, nor of the energy and intelligence needed for it.

In the casual contacts of everyday life it is incumbent upon every Christian to treat every man as his equal before God. There are social distinctions which convention and convenience make more or less justifiable, but it must ever be born in mind that such distinctions are really only conventional or convenient, and will not justi-

fy unChristian action towards anyone. Ethically it is just as wrong to insult the dignity of, or do a physical injury to, a ditch-digger as a king or president. Every human being, no matter how he earns his living, or what his color, race, creed, or education, is a potential son of God for whom Christ died. The parable of Lazarus and Dives shows Our Lord's attitude on this question, and we cannot improve upon it.

There is also the positive side of one's duty to one's neighbor, but the opportunities for the exercise of it are not so numerous in the cases of casual encounters as in intercourse with friends and intimates. The same principle, however, covers both. The requirement is that one should do everything possible to promote the true welfare of every man with whom one comes in contact. This involves many acts of self-sacrifice, but still more it involves the more simple but often more difficult acts of ordinary politeness and tact. These are ingrained habits with many people, requiring no conscious effort, but even such people sometimes find it hard to be polite to persons who are distasteful to them. Universal love does not require that one enjoy the society of all people. That would be impossible. But it does require that one love every man, no matter who or what he may be, which means that one will not willingly cause anyone real injury, either to his sense of dignity, nor to his soul, body or physical possessions. The achieving of certain high values may necessitate apparent hurt to some one of these

possessions of some people, but the will is to achieve the value, not to hurt another. Such injury is not real injury, for the achievement of a real value at the cost of a lesser one is a real advance, even though the interested party may not recognize it as such.

One phase of altruistic ethics which is of vast importance to all who have a cure of souls we have already mentioned, but cannot stress it too much. This is the opportunities for assisting in the moral life of other people which are presented in the Confessional, or the informal discussion in the Priest's study. Here is an opportunity for an infinite amount of good, but the danger of an equally great amount of evil. Let it be insisted once more that it is not the Priest's function to provide "rule of thumb" solutions for each and every problem that may be presented to him. He must be familiar with the principles of Christian ethics. He must be familiar with the life of his parishioners so that he may know their problems in an intimate way. He must be tactful in all his dealings with persons who are puzzled. But, aside from outlining the principles upon which all Christians must solve their moral problems, and giving the official opinion of the Church, where one is to be had, he must leave the solution of the problem to the individual. He has no right, either from the point of view of ethical principles, nor upon his authority as a Priest of the Church, to dictate the conduct of his flock. To refuse absolution to one whose moral judgment on a particular issue does not agree with his is to cut the person off from one mode of contact with God, and by

just so much to decrease his opportunities for learning the will of God in his case. The assumption of such authority is something for which there is no warrent, and the incurring of such a responsibility as the possible cutting off of a soul from God and membership in His Kingdom involves a temerity which is little short of Pharisaic pride.

The ethic of self-realization may be summed up in two brief quotations: the first the famous command of Socrates, "Know thyself", and the second ~~of~~ Our Lord's command, "Be ye, therefore, perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect". In other words, make a study of your own character, finding out not only its failings, but even more importantly, its possibilities. Be thoroughly acquainted with your talents, your capacities and capabilities and develop them to the highest degree circumstances will permit. Do not be afraid to consult others concerning yourself. It is no discredit to seek advice, but be sure that you really approve before acting on it. Cultivate the habit of self-examination as well as the habit of well-doing. Remember always that personality is a never-failing spring, which becomes deeper and richer as one shares it with others. Love is the active sharing of one's personality with all men and with God. Do not content yourself with the opportunities for doing good which knock upon your door, but go out and seek them. Self-realization for the Christian is the inte-

gration of the personality about the "summum bonum" of Christian ethics. The more perfect the integration the more harmonious one's accord with the universe and the more perfectly his functioning in the part which God would have him play in the universal plan. Here the application to practical problems belongs to the individual himself. He is an expert in the field in so far as his is intimate with the principles and their general application, and he must work out the details for himself.

Of equal importance to personal ethics and the ethics of altruism is a knowledge of the essentials of mental health. There is not space for a lengthy treatment of this vital factor in the moral life, but we would quote a few simple principles suggested by Dr. Menninger which are of great value in one's own mental life as well as in one's relations with other people:

"Set up as an ideal the facing of reality as honestly and as cheerfully as possible.

"Cultivate social contacts and social development.

"Recognize neurotic evasions as such and take advantage of opportunities for sublimation.

"Learn to know the evidences of mental pathology and how best to deal with them.

"Assume that the unhappy are always wrong." (1)

And to these we would add, do not fail to consult

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(1) "The Human Mind", p.363

an expert in mental diseases when you find a case which is beyond your knowledge. It is just as wrong today to neglect mental illness as it is to fail to consult a physician in the case of physical trouble.

Mystical activity is a method, and a very important one, of self-realization. It has a value of its own, and is really a correlate of the other principles we have been considering. However, it is of such a personal character, and is so dependent upon the psychical constitution of the individual, that we need not consider it here.

There is one further point which does not seem to come directly under any one of the classes, though it probably comes closer to the altruistic. It is an important one for all Christians to bear in mind, and especially for Priests of the Church. That is that it is quite contrary to any true concept of Christianity to recruit new members for one's own particular sect on the ground that one is recruiting for the Kingdom of God. It is the place of the Christian to attempt to convert people to Christianity, not to make them Presbyterians, Methodists, or Episcopalians. And in this connection it is well to bear in mind a point we mentioned some time ago, namely, that the most convincing way to present an ideal is by its embodiment in a person. The man or woman who most perfectly embodies the Christian ideal is the best possible missionary, and he needs little argument beyond the evidence of his own life.

Conclusion

It seems reasonable to assume that the ultimate aim of any investigation into ethical principles and the moral life is the same as the aim of any other consciously undertaken action, namely, the realization, or aid toward the realization, of what the investigator believes to be the highest good, or the "summum bonum" of the universe. This seems to indicate a begging of the question at the very outset, for one of the aims of ethical inquiry is the determination of the content or nature of the good, this very highest end or value. However, one of the limitations of the human mind is the fact that it must have something with which to work, and every investigation of a theoretical or abstract nature requires some sort of theory as a starting point.

We are now at the end of a long discussion in the course of which we have examined together many ideas, considered a great many problems, and reached a few conclusions. It may be as well to recall the latter in a brief summary.

Our study convinced us of the impossibility of finding a single objective criterion which could serve as an unfailing standard in every situation which life might present. Neither Our Lord's command to perfection, nor the concept of the Kingdom of God as the Christian "summum

bonum" are sufficiently objective to serve as criteria, since they are capable of such a wide latitude of definition and interpretation. The life and teaching of Jesus may serve as a most valuable guide, but it fails to fulfill all the requirements of the present state of civilization; nor is it possible to determine with any degree of certainty the authority or completeness of the records we have concerning it. The various criteria which have been suggested by various systems of the past are helpful, but all have their weak points, the most usual being their limitation to one of the high values of the moral life to the exclusion or subordination of one or more of the values which seem to be at least correlative.

Thus, one of our conclusions is that an objective criterion cannot be found, at least under the limitations to which man is now subject. However, the concepts of perfection and the Kingdom we believe to offer a possibility of interpretation, in the light of Christ's teaching and the subsequent experience of the Church. This interpretation we have formulated as principles which seem to be involved in what seem to us to be correlative values which, organized in the proper manner, make up the concept of the "summum bonum". Apparent conflict of principles seems to be inevitable in the created world, but we believe them to be impossible in the realization of the Kingdom. It is this conflict of principles which presents the problems of ethics and morality.

The values which we believe to be the highest attainable in this life, and that only by the help of God, are a social organism, including all men; a loving fellowship between all men in their immediate contacts which aims at the development in all of the nature which shall function best in that organism; the development of one's own self to the full capacity to fulfill one's concept of the highest values; and the development and full use of such aids as one's nature permits through the mystical modes of contact with the Highest Reality. From the principles which are involved in the realization of these values there are derivable a great many subordinate principles, which in turn are to be applied to the concrete problems of actual experience. The life which is consciously organized about the attainment of the "summum bonum", is developed through the meeting and solution of concrete problems. It is in actual life that theoretical ethics meets its tests, and it is valueless unless it can be brought to this testing floor.

The elevation of human society to the level of spiritual perfection fit for incorporation into the Kingdom of God is a task which calls for the best from all of us. Even that will prove insufficient without the help of the Almighty, nor, on the other hand, can it be achieved by the Almighty without the co-operation of mankind. The former we may be sure of, if Christianity is not entirely a mistake. The latter it is the obligation of all those who are followers of Christ to achieve, and it

is a task which is worthy the efforts of real men.

"Devotion to duty, alertness, enterprise, promptness, perseverence, courage, endurance, cheerfulness, and the exercise of intelligence and imagination are needed for the accomplishment of great tasks. Difficulties must be met, dangers forestalled, opportunities seized, efforts have to be renewed again and again, indications of coming changes must be observed, wise plans of action must be thought out, and if, as is likely, the objects aimed at are contrary to the wishes of people with power, opposition must be bravely encountered. The coming of the Kingdom of God that Jesus preached was in the true interests of all, yet conflicted with the selfish and shortsighted wishes of many, particularly of those wielding the greatest force. Consequently, when in love for God and mankind, His disciples sought first the Kingdom of God, they found themselves plunged into a war, and one that required exceptional courage and endurance, because they sheathed the sword as their Master bade them (Matt. xxvi.52), and suffered without striking a blow in their own defence (John xviii.36)." (1)

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(1) Spencer, "The Ethics of the Gospel", p.60

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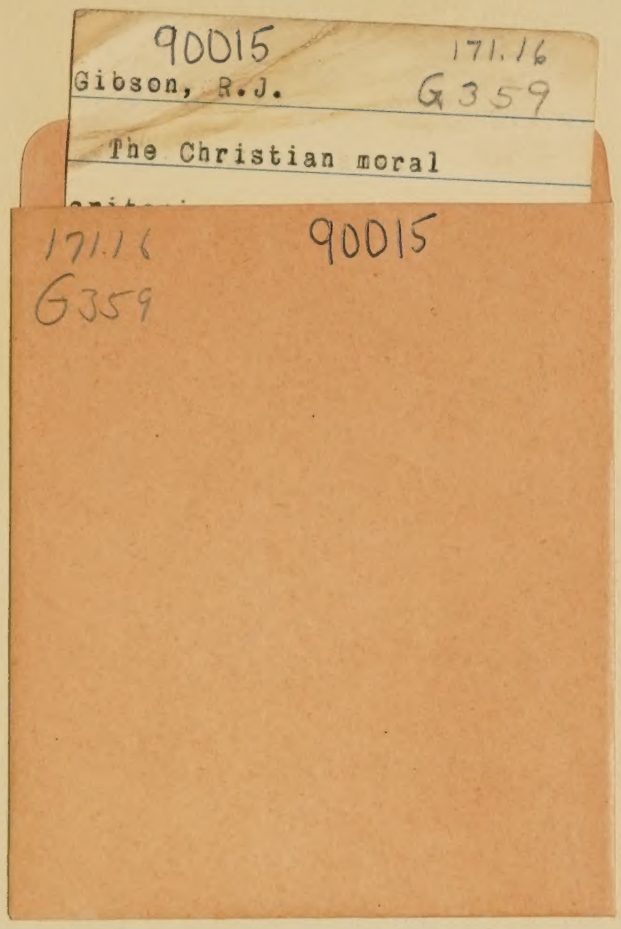
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